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**CUCKOO PRESS**

# COMMUNICATING VESSELS

Number 12



Max Walter Svanberg

*Public opinion exists only where there are no ideas.*

**-Oscar Wilde**

## SWIMMING TO HEAVEN

I hear a whisper,  
a cry;  
a murmur,  
it trembles over  
in the corner  
towards the moon  
that shivers  
in the hollowed out advance,  
pointing to the  
fortress of heaven's gate.

Listening to the  
whimper of dusk,  
blowing into my ear  
I swim...advancing  
slowly  
in the lavender of poppies  
that hums a majestic tune into my breast.

Two women weave  
their joyful lullabies  
on my chest,  
reassembling the lost fragments of dream;  
tenderly lifting flower petals from the rose  
of evening's chatter.  
And gracefully we wove the tapestry of daybreak,  
stretching our bodies against  
the lace of vines  
that renewed the rain clouds.

Here in our embrace  
the Earth  
bellowed a new tune,  
to which all the stars  
hummed along.

Here in the haltering advance of cultivation  
we struck the fresco as brambleberries  
enlivened our touch and advance.  
To the crystallization of dream  
we danced with the hoofbeats  
of our hearts,  
on the clamor of the well-lit full moon.

**Reproduction of Daily Life** by Fredy Perlman. For those interested in a thorough analysis of their daily slavery, but don't have the patience for Marx, this pamphlet is worth studying. (Black & Red, 1972) 24 pages. **\$2.00**

**Society of the Spectacle** by Guy Debord. Now that the situationists are hip and cool, it is a good idea to have an understanding of them, if only to refute the myth that they were merely avant-garde artists who were simply interested in stunts and pranks. If you can get through this difficult, but informative book, it might be a bit easier to inform the uninformed who think that they were the predecessors of lifestyle anarchists such as Crimethinc. (Black & Red, 1983) unpaginated. **\$8.00**

**Lip and the Self-Managed Counter-Revolution** by Negation. In a marvelous format with well-reproduced illustrations, this pamphlet criticizes the attempts at self-managing a watch factory in France during the 1970s. (Black & Red, 1975) 96 pages. **\$3.00**

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*The Eclipse and Re-Emergence of the Communist Movement* by Gilles Dauve and Francois Martin. If you are interested in examining what authentic communism is, check out this book. The word communism has been so maligned and abused by Eastern European bureaucracies, that it is hard for many to believe that communism is the exact opposite of Mao, Lenin etc. Instead communism means direct control of the means of life by those who produce them and changing life itself. Highly recommended. (Antagonism Press, 1997) 86 pages. **\$7.00**

*For a World Without Moral Order* by La Banquise. Little known, classic (written in 1983) assessment of social mores that is still relevant today. A persuasive and well-argued expose of a mechanism of control that is often neglected in favor of an exclusively economic interpretation of reality. (Antagonism Press, 1998) 35 pages. **\$3.00**

*Unions Against Revolution* by Grandizo Munis. This is an above average critique of labor unions written in 1960. It is probably the most clear and concise essays available on the topic. It was reprinted in France after the events of May 1968 and subsequently published in English here in the US. The pamphlet also contains a worthwhile essay by John Zerzan assessing the revolt against work. (Black & Red, 1975) 62 pages. **\$3.00**

*The Continuing Appeal Of Nationalism* by Fredy Perlman. A well-researched, informed examination and critique of nationalism. Points out how nationalism, both left and right wing, means only more death and misery. (Black & Red, 1985) 58 pages. **\$3.00**

*When Insurrections Die* by Gilles Dauve. An analysis, that is unfortunately virtually unknown, of how fights and popular fronts against fascism often end up colluding with capital and the state. A timely and important reminder that if, struggles are to effective and long lasting, they have to confront capital itself along with the state - not merely fascism which is only a form of condensed capitalism. (Antagonism Press, 2000) 36 pages. **\$3.00**

*Worker Student Action Committees: France, May '68* by Fredy Perlman & Roger Gregoire. Analysis of the events and a history of them in one well put together book. Also reproduces graphics and comics from that period. (Black & Red, 1969/1991) 96 pages. **\$6.00**

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*On the Poverty of Student Life* by the Situationist International. Necessary reading if one wants to grasp the petty mediocrity, stupidity and foolishness that defines and describes the student in contemporary society. (Black & Red, 2000) 31 pages. **\$3.00**

## COMMUNICATING VESSELS

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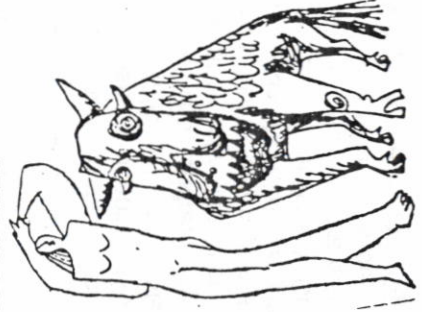
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# Individual, Class and Nation in Spain 1936-39

## By Juan McIver

### The individual in Lorca

The play *El público* (*The Public*) was written by Federico García Lorca (1898-1936) in 1930. It was never performed during his lifetime. On 16 July 1936 Lorca left the manuscript in Madrid. Five weeks later, he was murdered by Franco's troops in Granada.

Franco's military *alzamiento* of 17 July 1936 started ostensibly against the Popular Front Government but in reality it was aimed at crushing the insurgent working population of Spain. The Italian and German Fascist regimes had defeated similar social unrest, and in neighbouring Portugal, Salazar's state was also a bulwark of reaction. Léon Blum's Popular Front government in France showed a different way of deflecting social unrest. In the USSR, Stalin was preparing further purges — the Moscow Trials that shocked the world in August. Claiming to represent the traditions of the Russian revolution, Stalinism was as totalitarian as the Nazi regime. As Stalin's Great Terror unfolded in 1936-38, the world rushed to the abyss of WWII.

Lorca shunned political involvement in a society ruthlessly polarised by the Army and the Popular Front parties. However, he had humanist and utopian opinions about the individual and society. In April of '36, he said in a long interview: "I see it clearly. Two men are walking along a riverbank. One is rich, the other poor. One has a full belly, the other pollutes the air with his yawns. The rich man says, 'Oh, what a pretty boat I see on the water! Look sir, at the iris flowering on the shore.' And the poor man grumbles, 'I'm hungry. I don't see anything. I'm hungry, very hungry.' The day hunger disappears the world will see the greatest spiritual explosion humanity has ever known. Men will never be able to imagine the happiness that will erupt on the day of the Great Revolution."

(1)  
For holding such opinions, and for his sexual ambivalence, Lorca was a marked man. Franco's military-clerical crusade was not only anti-working class but deeply homophobic and misogynistic.

In *El público*, Lorca's views about individuality are profoundly subversive. They address the difficulty, if not impossibility, of love in a repressive society. His first play, *El maleficio de la mariposa* (*The Butterfly's Evil Spell*), was a scandal in 1920. The plot has been called 'preposterous'. (2) Perhaps, after all, it dealt with the rather unpredictable love between a cockroach, Curianito, and his Butterfly paramour. Other creatures in the play were glow-worms and a scorpion. By the end of the drama Curianito and his beloved Butterfly die, proving that love brings only suffering, never joy. (3) But the play also asserted that "...love

Serbs didn't take prisoners during WWII. The fate of German Army Group E. Nasty business. It is not justified to glorify Serbian resistance, as some journalists are doing, calling on the Serbs to fight and die for murderer Milosevic.

People don't usually turn against war because of rational argument. It's usually a complex combination of bad leadership and unrelated developments like a rise in the class struggle. But given that arguments have a purpose, good ones are better than bad ones.

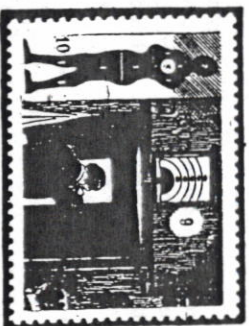
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*The titles below inform the perspectives of this publication. All of them are highly recommended for understanding the ugly world we happen to inhabit. All book and pamphlet sales go toward helping to keep this publication stable, and your purchases allow more stock to be ordered.*

**Olive Drab Rebels** by Matthew Rinaldi and Kevin Keating. This pamphlet provides an important understanding of military organizing during the Vietnam War era. (Antagonism Press, 2002) 37 pages. **\$3.00**

**Yugoslavia: From Wage Cuts to War** by *Wildcat*. Originally published as a sizable article in issue No. 18 (Summer 1996) of the British communist magazine *Wildcat*, it has lost none of its relevance. This pamphlet provides a clear, class based analysis and chronicle of the break-up of Yugoslavia in the mid 1990s. With the hypocritical sentencing of Milosevic before the Hague Tribunal later this year, everyone should read this essay. (Communicating Vessels/Cuckoo Press, 2004). Unpaginated. **\$3.00**

**Letters of Insurgents** by Sophia Nachalo & Yarostan Vochek. This gigantic book, actually written by Fredy Perlman, is a compelling account of two radicals who met during a social upheaval in Europe. Separated after the radical situation, they reunite through these letters that are fictional, but contain experiences from Fredy's own life. The characters -are also composites of Fredy's friends who he met in different places he, and his wife Lorraine, traveled to. This book helped to change this writer's ideas and perceptions of reality. Can't recommend it enough. (Black & Red, 1976) 831 pages. **\$14.00**





The left is just as racist as the right. It is just as racist to make a point of being positive towards members of particular ethnic groups as it is to make a point of being negative. Both left and right emphasize race, giving it more importance than it deserves. From the innocent, bumbling attempts of an American to identify with his Italian ancestors' culture to the assumption that Albanians and Serbs are unable to live together, racism is the road to hell.

The question arises whether it is justified to use arguments you don't believe to achieve something. For example, we think dodging the draft was the only decent thing Clinton ever did. But it is possible to undermine his standing in the military by arguing that, as a draft dodger, he has no right to lead the troops. If, somehow, you bring the US troops home by arguing that the USA has no vital national interest in the Balkans – the argument of Pat Buchanan et al. – would you not do it, even though you don't support the US national interest?

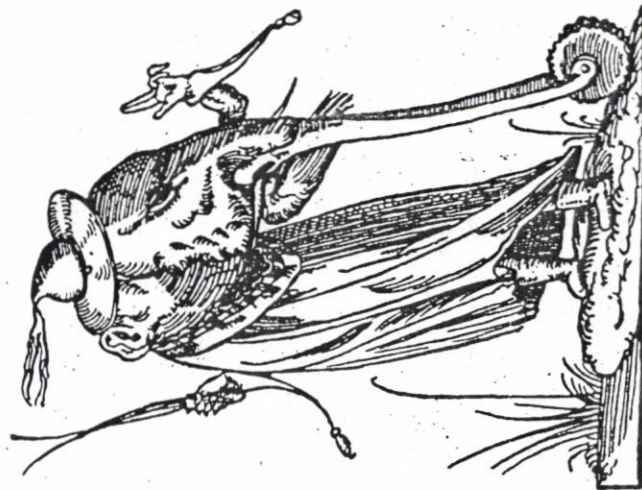
The answer is not as easy as it seems. In general, we simply try to tell the truth as far as we are able to see it. But this is a war! There is no principle saying you have to be honest. The arguments against dishonesty are practical, not moral. In the first place, you have to be able to back up your original dishonesty with more. Arguments have implications, and false arguments have false implications. Eventually, you would start believing the lies yourself. This is called leftism. The false arguments would backfire – you would be propping up positions which eventually do lead to war. Suppose they replaced Clinton with a man or woman of unimpeachable integrity? Arguing that the USA has no business sorting out European problems implies that European powers do. This was Hitler's delusion. In short, dishonesty is a slippery slope, which no one is agile enough to step on and survive. We try to stick to our real positions, without making concessions to what most people appear to believe. This does not mean promoting The Dictatorship of the Proletariat for the Abolition of Wage Labor every time you open your mouth. It is necessary to put forward partial arguments. This is particularly easy in a situation like the Kosovo crisis, when the enemy is failing even according to its own standards. There is no point in preaching to workers in uniform in the 90's the terminology of the communist left in the 20's.

To repeat: the use of the word "we" to describe NATO should never be allowed to pass without comment. It is necessary to defend, in simple terms, the real reasons for bringing this massacre to an end. "Vietnam" is a simple argument. "Innocent civilians" is another. "NATO is making things worse" gets the point across. "We have no interests in common with Clinton and Milosevic, and every interest in common with our fellow workers in Yugoslavia" is a bit more complicated. It is necessary to temper one's anger with patience. Rome wasn't burned in a day. It is justified to undermine the war effort in Western countries by describing in detail the nuclear bomb-proof tunnels from within which the Serbian army could wage guerilla war for a year. The fact that the

springs forth with equal intensity on all planes of love." (4) To assert that insects (and, later, gays) were capable of the most intense and sublime expressions of love was indeed subversive in the 30s.

*El público* contains many of Lorca's intimate views of the individual's tragic fate in society. Because the manuscript included themes of homosexual 'mad love' (*amour fou*), he knew the play would face scandal and fierce opposition. This was true in spite of the victory of the Second Republic in 1931. "This is for the theatre years from now" he remarked at the time, "Until then, let's say no more about it." (5)

The play's symbolism ruthlessly exposes the violence endemic in society. The main character is a Theatre Director who perishes attempting to renew himself through a 'Theatre of Beneath the Sand.' This is a theatre of authenticity; a living project where the lies and pretenses of the repressed and repressive public are exposed. For his own play, the Director uses the Romeo and Juliet characters from Shakespeare's play. However, Juliet is a youth in disguise. The real and moaning Juliet has been left gagged and trussed under the seats. To the Director, it didn't matter if the sexes were swapped. But the public didn't tolerate this transgression and 'the revolution' broke out. They disemboweled the Director, Romeo and both Juliet's. A lady witness remarks '...the revolution had no right to desecrate a tomb.'





*El público* shows the influence of Pirandello, the (mainly French) avant-garde (Cocteau) and surrealism.

In Lorca these influences and techniques are woven into a new, magical and delicious tapestry. Here we have a stropky Juliet arguing with one of the White Horses (who trumpet and talk back):

"People, and yet more people; they'll be in my tomb next, taking over my very cot. I'm not interested in discussing love, and theatre; what I want is ... to LOVE.

White Horse. TO LOVE!

Juliet. Yes, a love that lasts no more than a moment." (6)

In Lorca's plays love is elusive and violence is always near the surface. Witness this surreal dialogue between two figures, one covered in little golden bells and the other with red vine leaves:

"Bells. If I changed myself into a cloud?

Vine leaves. I'd change myself into an eye.

Bells. If I changed myself into a turd?

Vine leaves. I'd change myself into a fly.

Bells. If I change myself into an apple?

Vine leaves. I'd change myself into a kiss.

Bells. If I changed myself into a breast?

Vine leaves. I'd change myself into a white bedsheet.

Voice (*sarcastic*). Oh well done!

Bells. And if I were to change myself into a moonfish?

Vine leaves. I should change myself into a knife." (7)

Lorca's vision of the individual, and of his tragic quest for love, has the resonance of the social conflict devouring Spain in the mid 30s. His love, disguised by endless masks that crushed, is not the marvellous of Breton's *amour fou* (1937), but he would have shared Fourier's criticism of the society that killed that *divine passion*: "...what is the aim of this political system which represses love so violently? Is it to reduce society to poverty, deceit, oppression, carnage, etc? Of course not. But this has been the result of the civilised system which represses love and grants it only a minimum of legitimacy." (8)

The individual is defined by Lorca as a being passionately in need of love. "He alone loves who has the strength to hold fast to love," wrote Adorno in 1946. (9) The fact that individuals, generally, cannot fulfill this *species need* in communal life is a fundamental critique of an alienated society. Lorca's art, and specifically *El público*, is therefore a testimony of

an empire" so it should stop trying to knock the backward Balkanities back to their senses. It should be obvious that this is a minimalist argument. NATO is the armed force of a civilization which thinks it can and should rule the world, just like the British Empire, and NATO's conclusions follow from his premises: "we" have to go in there and stop the savages from killing each other.

The USA is a particularly racist country. By this, I'm not referring so much to outbreaks of race hatred like the recent murder of a black man who was dragged behind a truck by a gang of Texas rednecks until his head came off. I mean the everyday emphasis on ethnicity as an important category. I often meet people who say "I'm Irish" or "I'm Italian." I say "No you're not, you're American." It's a different matter when an African American makes a big deal out of it. Slavery was A Bad Thing, ok? But Americans are generally prone to make an issue out of ethnicity, even where it's clearly irrelevant, as in the case of Italian Americans. Americans are often surprised that British and Irish people are not constantly fighting each other. The US media is largely responsible for projecting their own racism onto other countries. However, the widespread stupidity which prevails in the USA has got something to do with it as well.

Every time someone uses the innocuous word "we" to describe their country's military, they should be challenged, even if they oppose the war, e.g. "Face it, America, we blew it" Harley Sorensen, *SF Examiner*, 6 April. George Orwell pointed out at length how language is demeaned by politics to make people think along the lines drawn by politicians. I don't describe the government's campaign of murder as "we." I don't say "we" fought Hitler, or "we" went into Vietnam. I am not involved in the bombing of Yugoslavia. Neither is anyone I know. It isn't us, it's them. The average Joe in Yugoslavia has a lot more in common with us than we have in common with "Mad" Albright and the rest of Washington's Trenchcoat Mafia.

Racism is not natural. If it were, we would have problems figuring out which race to identify with. Measurements of human DNA have shown, roughly, that half of the people in Africa are more closely related to people in the rest of the world than they are to the other half of the people in Africa. Appearances can be deceptive. Racism is produced by a constant barrage of propaganda by the state, backed up with violence. In many cases, a government force will bomb members of their own ethnic category, and blame it on another. This has happened at least twice in Bosnia. Governments, and armed gangs with the ambition of becoming governments, drive people into their allotted ethnicities, often against considerable resistance. Far from being an endemic illness which needs the government to keep the lid on, racism is a product of the state.

It is fairly obvious why the state promotes racism. It keeps people divided, so they can't unite and overthrow it. Ethnic conflict and the breakup of Yugoslavia was started when the Yugoslav Communist Party ran out of other ways to prevent strikes. The leading bureaucrats split the party into its national sections and helped each other out by starting a vicious cycle of racist violence and counter-violence.



cheek version of this position can be found at "A War Too Far" by Julie Birchill, *The Guardian*, 3 April – "Except this time, by reducing Serbia to rubble, side by side with our buddies, the Luftwaffe, we're the Fascists." The crimes of Tito's Yugoslavia against unarmed German and Croatian prisoners and even their families, aided by the British Army, was one of the great atrocities in a century of atrocities. Churchill didn't mention the story in history of the war.

Even worse is Simon Jenkins' "The manner in which we conduct this war demeans British values" – *The Times*, 28 April. Has he never heard of the bombing of Dresden?

Then there are the arguments for staying out of the Balkans because they've all hated each other for hundreds of years and "we" can't stop them. William Rees-Mogg writes in *The Times*, May 3 1999, "The Balkans have been at war for as long as human history has been recorded." This is simply false. For most of recorded history, and the whole of prehistory, the Balkans was not at war. Marija Gimbutas's extensive archaeological research (e.g. *The Civilization of the Goddess*) shows that even during the birth of the agricultural period, from the 7th to the 3rd millennium BC, Balkan peoples lived in peace. War didn't exist until Indo-European warrior civilizations conquered them. More recently, socialist Yugoslavia was all about affirmative action and ethnic harmony. According to Mogg, "Yugoslavia itself, established in 1919, was always more of a timebomb than a nation. It contained at least six hostile ethnic groups, forced to live inside its borders: Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Bosnian Muslims, Albanians and Hungarians, as well as the smaller minorities."

Does he mean that all the ethnic groups were hostile to all the others all the time? The truth is, most of the people of Yugoslavia didn't even think of themselves as belonging to ethnic groups until their rulers insisted upon it. And they didn't generally fight each other. In fact, most people in Yugoslavia still get along with their neighbors. NATO bombs have destroyed housing projects in which Albanians, Turks and Serbs lived relatively happily. If they had arguments, they were not along racial lines. All the ethnic violence has been caused by small gangs of heavily armed men claiming to belong to particular ethnic groups. These gangs are not an expression of the people they claim to represent. It is these gangs that international bodies like NATO and the UN negotiate with and promote into governments as they carve up the Balkans. In many cases, the violence has not been along ethnic lines anyway. The Yugoslav army has frequently shelled villages regardless of who lives there, forcing the entire population to flee. NATO has of course killed hundreds of civilians of all nationalities.

Give old Moggie his due. At least he opposes the war. But like American conservatives, who oppose the war because "our boys" should not lose their lives fighting Europe's interminable racial conflicts, he does so for the wrong reasons. He concludes from his dismal view of human nature that the Balkans has only been at peace when it was ruled by a strong empire. And "NATO is not

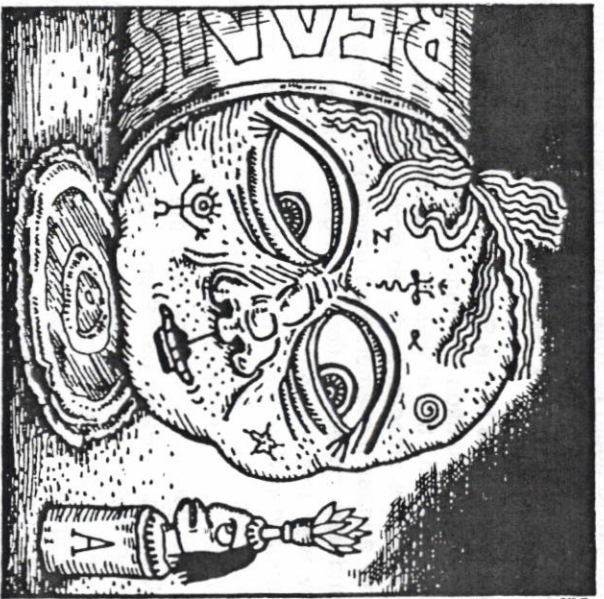
rebellion, of refusal to adapt to inhumanity. His art is also a tribute to his strength to hold on to love. All humans have this capacity, in greater or lesser degree, but unfortunately few of us leave records of this quest in art forms.

### **The individual and class in the Spanish Civil War**

Was there a 'social revolution' in Spain in 1936-39? In key industrial regions, and in Madrid, there was a resolute workers' and popular resistance to Franco's *alzamiento* during and immediately after 19 July 1936. Suddenly a mass movement was unleashed, of factory takeovers by workers and land collectivizations by agricultural workers and poor peasants. However, this elemental class movement coexisted with the bulk of the Republican Government, and supported it. Anarchists of the CNT-FAI, UGT trade unionists and the Marxists of the POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista) rushed to support (albeit critically) and even join the Popular Front coalition and the Generalitat in Catalonia. The Spanish Communist Party, until then relatively small, was extremely active in reviving the moribund Republic. The autonomous interests of the workers were subordinated to the needs of the democratic state. These needs momentarily coincided with the USSR's strategic needs. Just like the Italian and German Fascists supported Franco's crusade, Stalin supported the Republic's. From the late summer of 1936 the workers' militias were gradually militarised into a National, centralised Army. The process of militarisation was criticised and resisted, but it became irresistible when the Army's modern weapons were supplied by the USSR. A minority tried to resist the totalitarian drift by insurrection in Barcelona in May 1937, but it was too late by then. The revolutionary wave had receded and suffered a defeat in Spain, as it had already in Russia, Germany and Austria. The workers' resistance in Spain waned and had to be propped up with intense propaganda and coercion. The interests of the Republic, as upholder of the Nation, became paramount, not social emancipation. Anti-fascism thus replaced the vision of a classless society. Anti-fascism too was crucial for Stalinism to justify the Great Terror, and to deflect attention from Stalin's underlying strategy of forging a pact with Hitler.

In *Stalin, Willi Münzenberg and the seduction of the Intellectuals* — part of the recent literature on the period — the American writer Stephen Koch explains the international dimension of the Spanish Civil War. Stalin wanted to reach an agreement with Hitler, whose military might he feared. In order to do that, he wanted to use Spain as a bargaining chip. In fact, to appease Hitler, he sacrificed his own supporters in Spain. Inside the USSR itself, he was decapitating his General Staff (who were anti-German) during the purges of the Great Terror. This was to show Hitler that the USSR wasn't a threat and might even be an ally. The





Great Terror also allowed Stalin to exterminate any possible threat to his total power. The gamble in Spain seemed to work. In 1939, Hitler and Stalin signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact which allowed Germany and Russia to invade Poland without mutual fears. (10) That started WWII in September but it didn't stop Hitler from invading Russia in 1941. The Spanish Civil War ended in April 1939, with Franco's total and unconditional victory.

This is part of the 'macro-history' that provides the backdrop to the 30s. Without grasping these events, it's difficult to understand the seemingly isolated 'personal' events and tragedies of that period. The films *Burnt by the Sun* and *AI No Corrida* depict fictional private tragedies in the same period of history. One happens in Russia as the terror of the purges engulfs all human relations and the other in a militarised Japan. The subtle overlap of the particular with the general emphasises the poignancy of these symbolic tragedies. Yet, in these films, as in history, the individuals were cruelly subordinated to the barbarism of the macro-level. All great works of narrative art have this dimension — a critical depiction of the mutual interaction between the general and the particular. It applies much less to the visual arts, and even less to music. In the mentioned films, the isolated monad, the particular, is defeated by the macro-level, by the false community that speaks in the name of individuals.

## BAD REASONS TO OPPOSE THE WAR IN YUGOSLAVIA

By Wildcat (UK/US), May 4, 1999

*Although the bombing of Yugoslavia occurred over four years ago, the memory of it and the Balkan break-up still lingers. At the time of the break-up and the subsequent NATO bombing, it was one of the most hotly contested issues. It, to this day, remains a subject that is both confusing and continues to plague many radicals. And with the sentencing of Milosevic later this year, the subject of the break-up of Yugoslavia is still, in my mind, crucial to try to understand. In this short, but important and highly informative piece written at the time of the bombing, the author constructively critiques different peoples' response to the bombing.*

This war has gone so badly that we have the luxury of sorting out good reasons for opposing it from bad reasons. There are many opponents of the war with whom we have to work, but are obliged to make clear where we differ with them.

The arguments for the war are so ludicrous that we would not dignify them with a response. What can you say in reply to people who say "any loss of life is regretted" each time they blow up a bus, leaving the dismembered corpses of seven-year-olds scattered along the road? People who insult our intelligence by trying to personalize the war by talking of "degrading his facilities," meaning killing people, or wonder how much punishment "he" can take. People who complain of the smell of death from "the killing fields of Kosovo" at the same time as they turn the whole of Yugoslavia into a graveyard? Who use the third person to describe events — "unfortunately, after weapon release, a bus crossed the bridge" — rather than "we did it." "We have to do something to prevent another Hitler" has turned out to be such a stupid argument, it is leading to questions about why "we" started WWII.

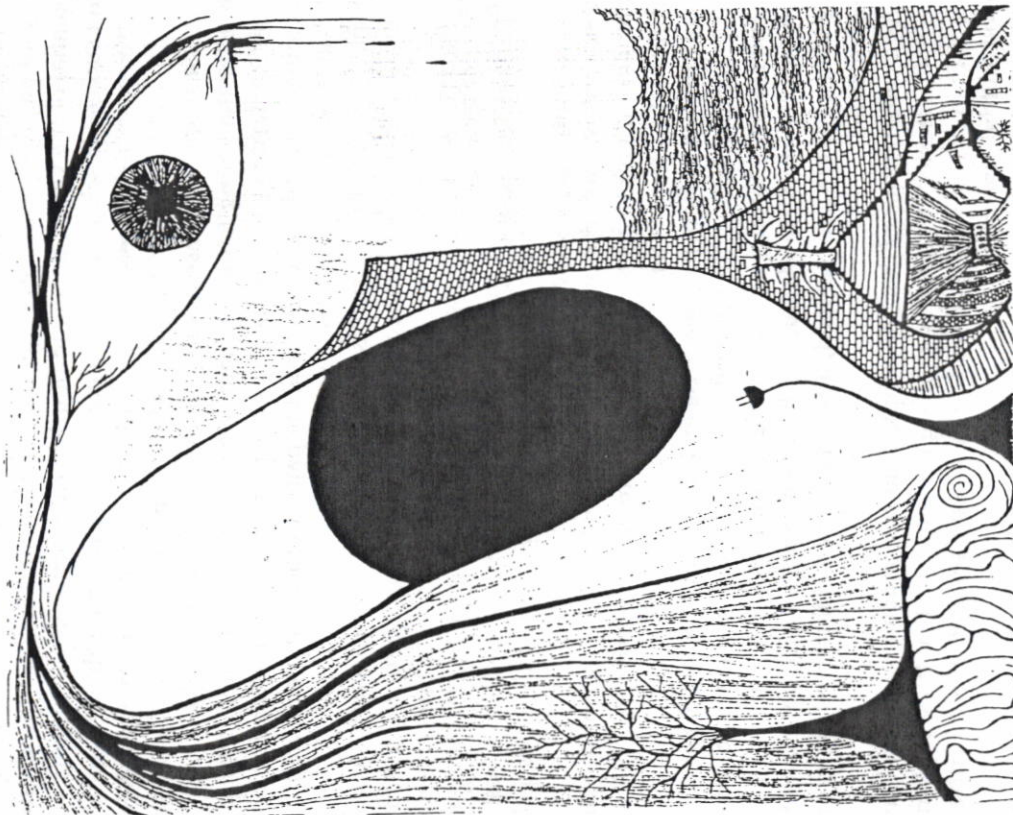
But if the reasons for supporting the war are obscene, there are also bad reasons for opposing it.

The majority of opponents of the war in the US are conservatives. Among their reasons for opposing the war are that it's too expensive and that Clinton does not have The Moral Authority To Send Our Boys Into Battle. This implies that, if he had the moral authority — like George Bush, who served in the military and was never caught lying in court — it would be ok for him to send Americans to get killed killing Yugoslavs.

There are the anti-fascist arguments, which say we should not kill the Serbs because they fought heroically against the Germans in WWII. A tongue-in-



constantly stifled. All that is left if for us is to sing our songs in the darkness of our lingering shadows; lonely, tired and frustrated with a world that was not made for such sensitive and caring souls.



"MOURIR À PETIT FEU, C'EST QUAND MÊME MOURIR!"

Franco's victory brought immense suffering to thousands who emigrated to escape his terror. Many opponents, or 'neutrals' who couldn't escape were massacred outright, tortured, imprisoned or couldn't get jobs for years. But the victory of the other side (the Stalinist side by then) would have meant the same if not worse for many of those same people. By supporting one side of a conflict between gangs, humans become cannon-fodder (or at least dupes) of one of the gangs. That has been the fate of mankind this century. But it doesn't have to be like this forever. Perhaps the memory of the initial emancipatory movement that existed in Spain in 1936 is part of a history that still has to be reappropriated.

The Spanish Civil War was the most important political event before WWII; in fact, it was its preamble. The hundreds of thousands of workers and other civilians who perished in Spain, on both sides, were sacrificed for the dominant system of blocs, not for 'socialism.' In this sense, it wasn't 'Spaniards' or 'Catalans' or whatever who died, but part of humanity's living hope.

The 1995 film *Land & Freedom* seeks to present the POUM, the Anarchists and perhaps the Trotskyists as heroic revolutionaries who defended a revolution 'betrayed' by Stalinism. According to this, Stalinism 'opened the door' to Franco. In reality the mentioned political groups supported the Catalanian Republican government, the Generalitat. In turn, this regional apparatus supported the Central government in Madrid. It thus supported its Army. This Army (controlled by the Stalinists after Negrin dominated the Popular Front) systematically militarised the workers. (11) Trotsky's perspective in Spain was that workers should defend "the lesser evil." He wrote: "Only cowards, traitors, or agents of fascism can renounce aid to the Spanish republican armies."

The elementary duty of every revolutionist is to struggle against the bands of Franco, Mussolini, and Hitler." (12) And: "We are 'defensists'.... We participate in the struggle against Franco as the best soldiers [of the Popular Front Army].... (13) This perspective ignored completely that the Popular Front and its Stalinist supporters, in carrying out a prolonged civil war, had defeated the working class politically and socially, and decimated the most radicalised workers, a policy no different from Franco's."

After May 1937, the Stalinists tried to openly exterminate the POUM, Anarchists and Trotskyists, who at last rose in Barcelona in a last desperate attempt at self-survival. These parties were seen as potential threats by the Stalinists and Negrin. But these parties had become isolated from the then militarised working class. The state machine they had supported turned against them and massacred them. They no longer had any coherent mass support. Their deaths, like all deaths, are to be



deployed, but their own faith in lesser evils doomed them. What's worse, their calls for support for the Popular Front's military effort confused thousands of enthusiastic workers, who were then caught and mowed down in what became merciless gang warfare. This lack of adequate consciousness in the working population is at the root of the tragedy. In the unfavourable world situation of 1936, one isn't saying that the working population could have done differently. One cannot jump over one's shadow, and only the benefit of hindsight allows one to be clearer on the events. (14)

From the above, it is difficult to see how the contradiction between the individual and society – in national form in this case – was resolved in Spain in July 1936. It certainly never was in the period after. The individual in July 1936, insofar as he belonged to a fighting community of labour, did take actions that reduced the chasm. Many accounts exist confirming that a real movement of emancipation took place. The narratives and histories of Mary Low and Juan Breá, Grandizo Munis, Carlos Semprún-Maura, Burnett Bolloten and many anarchist historians, in spite of their differing perspectives, provide persistent confirmation of what the working class in cities and the countryside did on 19 July and thereafter. The destruction of prisons (soon to be rebuilt by the Republic), the agrarian collectives where money was partially abolished, the democratically-run *juntas* and *comités* (before the CNT-FAI-UGT committees recaptured and expanded their own influence), the ability of the population to persuade the forces of law and order, and even Franco's troops, to join them against the Franco onslaught. The vision of an emancipated life was being posed for real, it was being acted upon, even if the steps were faltering.

Michael Seidman's various writings on Spain's Civil War should be mentioned as indispensable studies on the role of 'individualism' during the conflict. These essays on working class 'individualisms' are provocative in that they suggest that any vision of emancipation that departs from the betrayal of individualism demanded by 'sacrifice' to a false, higher, collectivity is bound to provoke demoralisation and then resistance from the 'atomised' individuals. The particular and the general can enrich and propel each other toward emancipation only if there are no hidden agendas of domination:

"Thus, an analysis of resistance contributes to an understanding of a key function of the state in industrial societies and to the conclusion that one of the most vital functions of the state is to make workers work. During the 1930s, a weakened or permissive state encouraged resistance, whereas a repressive state — bourgeois or proletarian — reduced refusals to work. The growth and use of state power in Barcelona and Paris during the Popular Fronts cast doubts on the

making decisions about your future. You don't want to flip burgers for the rest of your life."

To the teacher, what then is the alternative to flipping burgers? Joining the professional world where no stigmas are attached. "Become a doctor, lawyer, banker, professor, teacher etc." The dull repetition of these words emblazons its fingers on the student's throat, choking her. Very often, the counselor or teacher, instead of allowing the creative potential of the young person to flourish, categorizes such students who can't succeed in school as being mentally ill, learning disabled, autistic or as having something else wrong with them. Which ultimately means they can't fit into the mold. More often than not a student's "different" way of acting is a defense mechanism against an insane world.

But for the young tender student, what is there to fit into? Fitting in means conforming to a brazen system that styles itself after economic scheming and indifference towards the pain of others. It means getting a job and thus "succeeding" in the world.

What is a measure of successful achievement by the way? A good example of that would be the person who does research for the military-industrial-complex. The researcher is not only praised, but rewarded for his services in helping to defend "our American way of life." He is given medals, plaques and hefty raises for his research into how best to incinerate whole populations with precision weapons and sticky jellies that burn the skin upon contact.

And just what is this way of life that our "brilliant" scientist boldly defends? Complacency, apathy and remaining passive to the ugly reality that surrounds us.

We are trained from day one to defend this...why? Because that's life.

It is acceptable to, with ignorant arrogance, resign ourselves to being a "good student" throughout the course of our lives.

In fact, the childlike playfulness has been extinguished, but inhabiting the landscape are undeveloped, little, infantilized children whose growth was retarded.

As a consequence of this, the people I am surrounded by, by and large, are not interested in something different; something that truly challenges the way in which we are trained to be a good student, a good citizen, a good faithful worker.

Instead those who clamor for life are strangled by it. To the creative, intelligent, caring person, there is nothing here in this world for her. We are forced to be outsiders in an alien world. It's as if our fleeting bodies wanted to touch the pattern of our lips to the cheek of life, but we are



# WE ARE NOT OF THIS WORLD

I was not made for this world. Nor do I possess the unspeakable cruelty that characterizes it and allows one to get "ahead" in it:

As a young boy my sensitivity abhorred the degree to which our young developing minds and bodies were subjected to the harsh drills of standing in line, and with fear filled passion, was contemptuous of the rote drill teachers who waved assignments and homework in our faces.

Standing on the sidelines I would listen, with confused compunction, to the teachers talk to their young students about acceptable ways that all good, obedient students must conform to. Lest one be exposed to the humiliation that accompanies "bad" behavior, students generally would follow in accord with the prescribed rules that our frail bodies struggled invariably against. And the humiliation that one was subjected to if, consciously or unconsciously, they broke a rule was undeniably mean.

With one's nose to the wall, the "bad" student was exposed to a harsh lair of punishment reserved for those who don't know how to repent. The walls of brimstone and damnation closed in. Students hissed, booed, pointed the finger and otherwise acted in spiteful malice toward the student who, because of lack of manners, foresight and morality, was forced to inhabit a world separately from that of the "good" students.

Born in the incubator of captivity, this is where many a spirit dies. Growth is retarded and stunted. The shining force for which life cries out...stops.

The curious stare, the playful quiver in the eye, running through the woods, making sand castles in the tide of the ocean shore; is abruptly halted in mid-stream, so the young grade-schooler can ready himself to enter high-school, then the "real world" of job and career.

And through all of this the young pupil is pressured to become "something," to choose a career, to get a "good" job. Creative fulfillment is held in disrepute. The "good" student is the one who chooses to immerse herself in those classes in high school that will be of benefit for her future career. The "bad" student is the one who, being unsure of her purpose in life, chooses to not pay much mind to the pressures of achievement. When she doesn't flunk out entirely, she takes art classes and the extra English class.

Kids then who choose this course, are inevitably frightened by the stern admonitions of the teacher who suggests that: "You have to start

argument of the workplace utopians that in socialism or libertarian communism the state will wither away." (15)

Seidman's 'cybernetic utopia' also suggests that the overcoming of capital, and thus alienation, and the separation between the individual and the community, can't be understood in terms of individual (or factory) reappropriation by workers of that which they produced. Today, in contrast to 1936, the amount of social abundance, the alienated social totality, would not require a 'politics of labour' but an immediate 'socialisation,' a transcendence of all separations.

In Spain in 1936, the individual became lost once the class retreated from the social and political stage, once the permanent need to exchange experiences, to discuss and take decisions collectively and individually, was lost. The emancipation of consciousness needed that atmosphere as the most basic precondition: debate and reflection are aspects of self-activity. The false and totalitarian communities of nation and state reasserted themselves once the individuals lost their own general terrain, lost their, own autonomous momentum.

Simone Weil was much more prescient than Trotsky, Nin or any other supporter/participant in the Spanish Republic's war against Franco. Her insights apply also to the course of WWII. In 1933 she wrote:





"Revolutionary war is the tomb of the revolution and will remain so as long as soldiers themselves, or rather, the armed citizenry, are not given the means of making war without a controlling apparatus, without police pressure, without a special court, without punishment for desertion. Only once in modern history was war conducted in this way, namely, under the Commune; and everyone knows how that ended. It seems that a revolution involved in a war has only the choice of succumbing to the deadly blows of the counterrevolution or transforming itself into a counterrevolution through the very mechanism of military struggle. The prospects of revolution seem therefore very limited, for can a revolution avoid war?" (16)

And:

"The absurdity of adopting war as a means of antifascist struggle is thus quite apparent. Not only would it mean fighting against a barbarous oppression by crushing the peoples under the weight of an even more barbarous massacre; it would even mean extending under another form the regime we want to abolish. It is childish to suppose that a state apparatus made powerful by a victorious war would alleviate the oppression to which the enemy state apparatus has subjected its own people; it is more childish still to believe that a victorious state would let a proletarian revolution break out in a defeated nation without immediately drowning it in blood." (17) This scenario became a grim reality as Nazi Germany was invaded by Allied and Stalinist troops from the West and the East, at the end of WWII.

Analysing the Russian Civil War (1918-20), Weil remarked:

"This war imposed on a revolution that had a program calling for the abolition of the army, the police, and the permanent bureaucracy, a Red army whose officer corps was made up of czarist officers, a police force that lost no time coming down on Communists more harshly than counterrevolutionaries, and a bureaucratic apparatus unequaled in the rest of the world. These apparatuses were all a response to the necessities of the moment; but they were fated to outlast those necessities. Generally speaking, war always reinforces the central power at the expense of the people." (18)

Weil joined the militias under Durruti in the summer of 1936, fighting in the Aragon front. After suffering from an accident, she returned to France in September, quite depressed by what she had seen.

Here are some of her reflections, made in October:

"Alas, there we also see forms of compulsion and instances of inhumanity that are directly contrary to the libertarian and humanitarian ideals of the Anarchists. The necessities and the atmosphere of civil war are sweeping away the aspirations that we are seeking to defend by

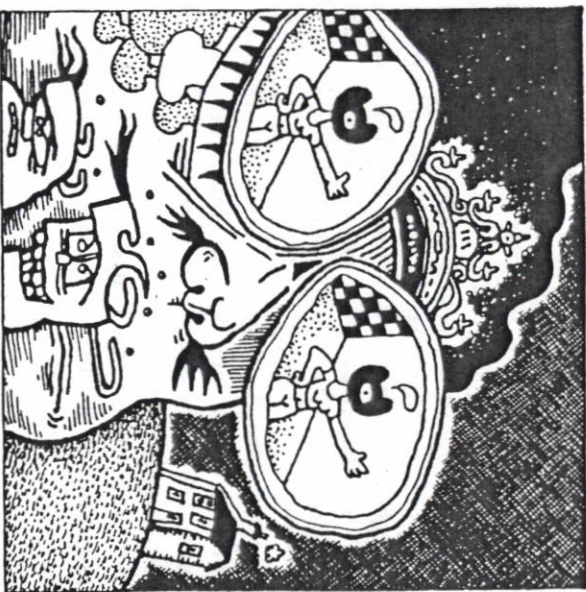
Serbia and reverse ethnic cleansing – the Kosovo Liberation Army." And now we might as well say that our only hope lies in national liberation armies "freeing" oppressed people the world over! Readers can examine the article at: [www.newsandletters.org/Issues/1999/May/5.99\\_ed.html](http://www.newsandletters.org/Issues/1999/May/5.99_ed.html).

<sup>12</sup> According to the 1996 *SIPRI Yearbook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) deaths from *all sides*, between the years 1992-1995, is estimated to be around 25,000-55,000. Deaths in any war, on all sides, are to be mourned, but it is clear that the deaths and atrocities committed by the Serbs have been (and still are) overexaggerated.

<sup>13</sup> See David Chandler's poorly written but informative *From Kosovo to Kabul* (London: Pluto Press, 2002) for an analysis of "humanitarian" military intervention and the West's one-sided meting out of "justice."

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Ken Knabb *Public Secrets* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1997) p. 109.

<sup>15</sup> According to Henk Canne Meijer, a self-taught council communist "After Hitler's rise to power, the militants of all tendencies were hunted down and imprisoned in concentration camps where large numbers disappeared. In 1945 some survivors were executed on the order of the GPU (Russian Military Intelligence) when the Red Army entered Saxony. No trace remained of the movement of workers councils. Commercial expansion and prosperity directed feelings elsewhere," quoted in his pamphlet *The Origins of the Movement for Workers' Councils in Germany*. For those who care to read the pamphlet online, it is available at: [www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/8195/origins1.html](http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/8195/origins1.html).





<sup>9</sup> Quoted in issue No. 10 of *Do or Die* journal, pp. 277-278. Copies of this important publication are available for \$15 ppd. from: **Do or Die C/O Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton, BN2 2GY, UK.**

<sup>10</sup> This is confirmed in Susan L. Woodward's *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1995), pp. 299-302. There are many books on the subject of Yugoslavia that are important to read. For a good background understanding of the region, see Leon Trotsky's *The Balkan Wars: 1912-1913* (New York: Monad Press, 1980). If you can get past his future career as Bolshevik bureaucrat and his support for military labor, this book is important. Misha Glenny's *The Balkans 1804-1999: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers* (London, 1999) contains many accuracies even if, in places, Glenny has a clear dislike for the Serbs. Both of Alex Dragnich's books *Serbia and Yugoslavia* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1998) and *Serbs and Croats* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992) help redress the commonly held belief that Serbs are universally despicable monsters. Tim Judah's *Kosovo: War and Revenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) has much accurate information, even to the point where the author is forced to say a few nice things about the Serbs and Milosevic. Noam Chomsky's *The New Military Humanism* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1999) is an indispensable examination of humanitarian ideology and of the NATO bombing in 1999. And Diana Johnstone's *Fools' Crusade* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002) does an important service by pointing out that the Serbs weren't the only players in the deadly game that occurred in the Balkans. In places she is too kind to Milosevic and the Serbs – even at times partisan. She also has easily discernable Stalinist sympathies. However, this shouldn't detract from the compelling narrative Johnstone presents related to the dissolution of the Balkans. The essay recommended most of all is the excellent article from *Wildcat* No. 18 entitled "Yugoslavia: From Wage Cuts to War." The article is online at: [www.geocities.com/norwar\\_buttheclaw/Yu\\_War.html](http://www.geocities.com/norwar_buttheclaw/Yu_War.html). We find ourselves in agreement with it. This is only a partial list of encouraged reading on the subject of Yugoslavia. You can write to *Communicating Vessels* for further reading suggestions.

<sup>11</sup> For anyone doubting that there was vocal, even loudly vocal support for the KLA, the Marxist-Humanist *News and Letters* is an undeniable example of a group that openly embraced the nostrums of the KLA. In an editorial with a title stating, "Support the Kosovar Resistance!" the editors replace fact with hyperbole and go onto laud this separatist grouping. To quote a particularly useful illustration, they say, "We cannot generate freedom for ourselves if we ignore genocide against an entire people." Here we don't even get the dignity of citing concrete sources that point to widespread genocide against Albanians by the Serbs. It goes further, at the beginning of the article they write, with blustering passion, "Yet the US continues to shunt aside the force which can stop

means of civil war.

Here we loathe military constraint, police constraint, compulsory labor, and the spreading of lies by the press, the radio, and all the means of communication. We loathe social differentiation, arbitrariness, cruelty.

Well, in Spain there is military constraint. In spite of the influx of volunteers, mobilisation has been ordered. The defence council of the Generalitat, in which our FAI comrades hold some of the leading posts, has just decreed that the old military code is to be applied in the militias.

There is compulsory labor. The council of the Generalitat, where our comrades hold the economic ministries, has just decreed that workers must put in as much extra unpaid time as might be judged necessary. Another decree stipulates that workers whose rate of production is too slow will be considered seditious and treated as such. This quite clearly means the introduction of the death penalty in industrial production.

As for police constraint: the police had lost almost all its power before the nineteenth of July. But to make up for that, during the first three months of civil war, committees of investigation, responsible militants, and too often, irresponsible individuals carried out executions without the slightest semblance of a trial, and consequently without any possibility of syndical or other control.

Nor did organized lying disappear after the nineteenth of July." (19)

As said above, Simone Weil's insights into the end of the emancipatory dream of 1936 were prophetic. They are still relevant today.

The absence of simultaneous global workers' emancipatory movements in that period is the ultimate cause for the failure of the revolution in Spain. Isolated in 'revolutionary zones' or 'communes,' emancipated individuals and their communities can't in the end transcend alienation and all the separations of a commodity society. This is because the conditions of domination are universal, and only a global co-ordinated insurrection could preclude their continuation.

Finally, what should we do with the historical memory of those tens of thousands of individuals in Spain, who in a wild festival of emancipation, confronted the 'problem of the total human being's self-realisation under the sign of freedom'? They left an unfulfilled promise of happiness for future generations. Their revolution was inevitable once they refused to sacrifice themselves for anything other than their own individual and communal interests, which were those of mankind. Once they abandoned, or were made to abandon, this universal task, they were devoured by a two-headed Leviathan.

"It is above all necessary to avoid once more establishing 'society' as an abstraction over and against the individual. The individual is the social being. His vital expression — even when it does not appear in the direct form of a communal expression, conceived in association with other men





— is therefore an expression and confirmation of social life. Man's individual and species-life are not two distinct things,... " (20)

#### A note on Lorca's individual and Marx's species being

Lorca's tragic view of the individual's quest for love fulfillment in modern society can have enriching parallels with Marx's concept of man as species being. Where Lorca has a tragic view of the quest of love, fusing it at times with death itself, Marx's views of human activity tend to be openly biophilic. These two views may seem opposite, but who could deny that death accompanies all human endeavour, including the quest for love? This may suggest too that the individual as species being, a child of Enlightenment classicism, can survive in the Romantic individualism of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and even in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century avant-garde. The idea and need for happiness, particular as well as general, may still contain a 'radioactive radical nucleus', as Vaneigem aptly suggests regarding Surrealism. (21) On the need for love, set always in the social context, Marx's and Lorca's views probably differ little.

In 1844 Marx advanced a view of death which would have challenged Lorca's:

"Death appears as the harsh victory of the species over the particular individual, and seemingly contradicts their unity; but the particular individual is only a particular species-being, and as such mortal." (22)

It is doubtful that Lorca's dramatic vision of death would accept this austere recognition of necessity. Marx's views were made from the standpoint of socialised humanity. In Lorca's dramatic universe, the world is strewn with traps, the harshness of suffering and of death can only be concealed by love. In *El público* Lorca conceived his characters

effort of agitators. However, most people unconsciously – and frequently in a confused conscious manner – realize that something is terribly horrid about this world. But most will still do nothing to try to change it – unless a social or economic crisis affects their livelihood directly.

Inevitably, at this juncture of crisis, people will be forced to make decisions about the fate of the world. The decisions that those of us oppressed by this system make will determine whether we can live in a unified but diverse world. The alternative is to enter the final descent into barbarism where all traces of empathy, solidarity and interdependence with the natural world are blown to the farthest reaches of inhumanity.

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the soviets – which roughly translates into councils – see Oskar Anweiler, *The Soviets: The Russian Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers Councils 1905-1921* (New York: Pantheon, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> Readers interested in an honest, direct and largely agreeable assessment of racism should consult Jean Genet's *May/Day Speech* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1970). It is an unparalleled statement by a white person. Unfortunately, it is out of print. However, most large university libraries stock a copy.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* edited by Mary-Alice Walters (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), p. 261.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in D.A. Smart *Pannekoek and Gorter's Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 1978), p. 87.

<sup>6</sup> For those who want to study the German and Dutch Communist Lefts, they are encouraged to consult the overwhelming book by the International Communist Current entitled *The Dutch and German Communist Left* (London: Porcupine Press, 2001). It is available for \$21 ppd. from: ICC PO BOX 288, New York, NY 10018-0288, USA.

<sup>7</sup> This part was aided by correspondence with Gilles Dauve and reference to Solomon F. Bloom's *The World of Nations* (New York: AMS Press, 1967), pp. 115-133.

<sup>8</sup> The following books are recommended reading on the subject of Israel/Palestine, Noam Chomsky's *Fateful Triangle* (Cambridge: South End Press, 1983/1999), Tanya Reinhart's *Israel/Palestine: How to End the War of 1948* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002) and the recently published *The Politics of Anti-Semitism* (Oakland/Petrolia: AK Press/Counterpunch, 2003) edited by Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair, and other books too numerous to mention. All of these books have their own set of shortcomings in different ways but are important to examine nonetheless. And of course Jean Genet's *Prisoner of Love* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2003) is truly one of the most deeply personal, bizarre, interesting and beautiful chronicles of the conflict.



interested in mutually discussing reality. It is not enough to merely talk about how horrible things are, but it is also of key importance to advance alternatives. We can cite historical examples whereby the oppressed started to take responsibility for their lives – such as the German council movement of 1918-1921, the insurrection in Poland of 1980-1982 and the worker student uprising that shook France in May-June 1968. These can be presented not as stale models but as moments that opened up new prospects for social life, and, creative endeavor itself. Such a heritage is rooted in direct face-to-face public forums in which people discussed the nature of the society they wanted to reside in as well as what shape that very society could possibly take. And on this score they are relevant today in that the public sphere needs to be revived, be it in cafes, public assemblies, street corners or neighborhood blocks. It is up to those of us who have an understanding and concern to try to guide people in a sane, publicly engaged direction.

Amidst the deepening of social and economic crises people are forced to change, for better or worse, often for the worse and sometimes for the better. One thing that history tells us is that the extraordinary revolutionary upheavals that effaced whole regions were due largely to shifts in the market or were the end result of the decline of unstable dynastic empires. And with this in mind, humanity won't change *exclusively* because of the tireless



Toyen

as one-sided fragments of humanity, confronted by inhuman and magical forces that never allowed for reconciliation. Love, in masks, sweetened approaching death. Yet the violence suggests that everything could fall apart at any time, even love.

But would Lorca have objected to:

"Man as an objective sensuous being is therefore a suffering being, and because he feels his suffering, he is a passionate being. Passion is man's essential power vigorously striving to obtain its object." (23)

Or to:

"...love can be exchanged only for love, trust for trust and so on. If you wish to enjoy art you must be an artistically educated person; if you wish to exercise influence on other men you must be the sort of person who has a truly stimulating and encouraging effect on others.... If you love unrequitedly, ie, if your love as love does not call forth love in return, if through the vital expression of yourself as a loving person you fail to become a loved person, then your love is impotent, it is a misfortune."? (24)

Probably not.

## -February 2000

### Notes

- 1 Leslie Stainton. *Lorca, A Dream of a Life*. London: Bloomsbury, 1998, 447.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 67.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 69.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 67.
- 5 Gwynne Edwards. *Notes for The Public*, British premiere, London: The Royal Stratford East Theatre, 1988.
- 6 Lorca. *Plays: Three. Mariana Pineda, The Public, Play Without a Title*. London: Methuen Drama, 1995, 78.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 68.
- 8 Jonathan Beecher. *The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier, Selected Texts on Work, Love and Passionate Attraction*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1972, 335.
- 9 TW Adorno. *Minima Moralia*. London: Verso, 1978, 172.
- 10 Stephen Koch. *Stalin, Willi Münzenberg and the Seduction of the Intellectuals*. London: Harper Collins 1995, Chapters 5 (127-145) and 10 (265-297) are particularly relevant. After this work, it will be difficult for surviving Stalinists who were active in Spain to deny that they were dupes or butchers for an imperialist power. Still, from time to time, defenders of the cult repeat the same sinister slanders against the POUM and the Trotskyists as 'agents of fascism.' The exposed truth



about the USSR's role in the Spanish Civil War is also called a 'leftover of the Cold War.' Koch is no defender of workers' autonomy, but his work confirms what Stalinism and 'anti-fascist fellow-travelling' meant prior to WWII (see below, bibliography note on Stalinist pamphlet by a one F. Graham).

11 For a very clear and succinct description of the initial events of the revolution in Catalonia, and the subsequent counterrevolution, Carlos Semprún-Maurá's *Revolución y contrarrevolución en Cataluña* (1936-1937) is an exemplary text. Unfortunately, there is no English translation.

12 Leon Trotsky. *The Spanish Revolution*. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973, 242.

13 Ibid., 289.

14 The Italian Fraction around the publications *Bilan* and *Prometeo* — the so-called Bordiguists — were able to analyse accurately many of the underlying class contradictions that erupted in the Spanish Civil War even before July 1936. See Agustín Guzmán Iborra's *Los bordiguistas en la guerra civil española*. Barcelona: Balance, Cuadernos Monográficos de Historia, 1994. The group that published *International Council Correspondence* in Chicago in the 30s was also able to grasp the situation, especially the May Days of 1937 in Barcelona, with remarkable clarity. See Paul Mattick, *The Barricades Must be Torn Down*, Moscow-Fascism in Spain. Chicago: International Council Correspondence, N. 7-8, August 1937.

15 Michael Seidman. *Workers Against Work, Labor in Paris and Barcelona During the Popular Fronts*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, 315-316.

16 Dorothy Tuck McFarland/Wilhelmina Van Ness. *Simone Weil: Formative Writings 1929-1941*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987, 245.

17 Ibid., 246-247.

18 Ibid., 249.

19 Ibid., 256-257.

20 Marx. *Early Writings*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975, 350.

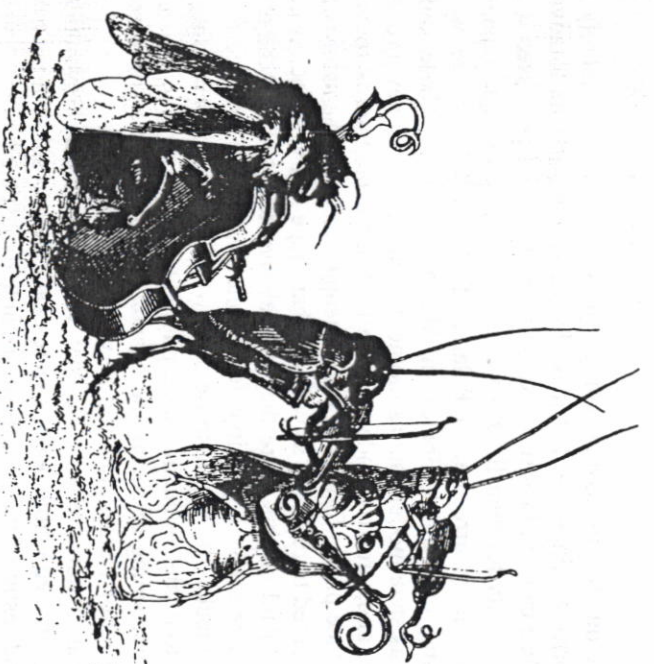
21 Jules-François Dupuis (Raoul Vaneigem). *A Cavalier History of Surrealism*. Edinburgh: AK Press, 1999, 127.

22 Marx. *ibid.*, 351.

23 Ibid., 390.

24 Ibid., 379.

An exhaustive bibliography (too large and detailed to include here) of books about the Spanish revolution that is supposed to accompany Juan McIver's text is available at the website "Left Wing" Communism – An Infantile Disorder?: [www.left-dis.nl/uk/lorca.html](http://www.left-dis.nl/uk/lorca.html).



Having lived in a society that amplifies the survival instinct to such a degree that self-preservation takes precedence over concern about other people, it is hard to imagine a world that nurtures promise, solidarity and empathy.

However, if freedom and creative development are to flourish, national borders and separations based upon gender, race, language and cultural differences must be dissolved. Needless to say, this is not to deny the rich and diverse cultural differences that can beautifully reinforce a connection to one another and the natural world. In order of fact, a variety of exquisite foods enlivened with a stupendous amalgam of song and dance, would certainly be cultivating grounds for a profound and high-minded world.

### Where to From Here?

In the wake of defeat after defeat, the bold defense of internationalism seems anachronistic. Certainly, to most, it is. But if we were to gauge the popularity of a vision by its standing in the opinion polls, we would be obliged to sever our revolutionary convictions entirely. Of course there is no mass movement fighting for such a vision. If there were the world in which we inhabit would be an entirely different place.

Nonetheless, what is still important to articulate, for the here and now, is an understanding of such a vision to the small number of people who are



politics) needs, in this setting, both racism and anti-racism; sexism and anti-sexism; nationalism and anti-nationalism. As a matter of fact, both politics and capitalism utilize whatever suits its purposes. It can be said that, during the period directly following the Twin Towers crash on September 11<sup>th</sup>, there was a heightening of national unity not seen since WWII. Arabs were declared to be the outsider and dealt with accordingly. Rounded up, beaten into submission by hatemongering thugs, put into prison cells, deprived of food, water and sunlight, Arabs were – and still are – far from being treated with the “multicultural” dignity and respect America prides itself on. But this makes sense. It is not entirely a change of mindset that transforms people’s relationship to one another and the world around them. Indeed, systemic, overriding social change is the only force that can alter mindsets on a vast scale. Nonetheless multiculturalism is presented as the end all be all, in effect saying: if we change minds and consciousness, there is no real need for social revolution. After all, as this post modernist ethos teaches us, collectively organized movements for social transformation carry within them the very seed that inevitably leads to dictatorship. And of course we wouldn’t want to infringe on the autonomy of the individual – who somehow wafts in the air devoid of any social context – by “forcing” him to engage in public, direct activism.

According to our schoolteachers, some workers in Russia went down the wrong path in 1917 by paving the way and allowing the Bolshevik party to seize power... So in the end, as it is presented to us, we might as well forget aspirations, hopes and dreams for a united humanity. Our shared interests as a species, according to this way of conceiving the world, are of no import. To those who manage this world, it is always better to have proletarians fighting each other in the Balkans, Palestine or on the battlefields of Iraq than to allow us to develop, together, a world qualitatively different than this one. A world in which slaughter based upon trivial differences in skin tone, linguistic tongue or gender, would, if humanity lives up to its task, be consigned to the dustbin of history.

As a species, what makes us unique individually and communally is that we have much in common with each other: our ability to laugh, cry, speak, love, hate and feel empathy. We are also part of a larger whole – the flower budding, the sunset, the pine tree; the natural world is as much a part of us as friendship is.

But is it a mere utopia to think that we can open the prisons, disband the army and construct a human community, where cooperation and the sharing of goods and resources becomes a social value? Maybe. Here we are not saying that – as many contemporary leftists wrongly proclaim – it is the inherent predetermined destiny of mankind to create a sane, rational world.

## ***Postscript to The Olive-Drab Rebels: Military Organising During The Vietnam Era***

*The following is a new postscript to The Olive Drab Rebels pamphlet published by Antagonism Press in London and available from Communicating Vessels for \$3 postpaid.*

The U.S. Armed Forces suffered a severe setback in Vietnam. The rebuilding efforts after 1975 followed the thinking discussed in “Olive Drab Rebels”: create an “all-volunteer” army based on pay hikes, college tuition in exchange for subsequent military enrolment and promises of high quality training which would allow recruits to re-enter the civilian world with marketable skills.

As the collective memory of the debacle in Vietnam partially faded, many have enlisted and the increasing number of enlistees have indeed opted for combat training, though most doubted such training would actually involve them personally in a large-scale war. At the same time, the U.S. military leadership continued to be wary of the fortitude of its own troops and remained significantly worried about the willingness of U.S. civilians to accept high casualty rates. Hence, the drive toward “mechanised warfare” accelerated from 1975 through 2003. Boosted by an unrealistic view of the precision reliability of “sophisticated” missiles and bomb delivery systems, the ruling class spent hundreds of billions to develop weapons which could pulverise a country from the air, leaving the ground troops with the lower risks of “simply” mopping up the mess left behind.

This was clearly the strategy of the Bush administration in the current war against Iraq. “Shock and awe” was presented to the U.S. population as an air assault of such overwhelming magnitude that resistance on the ground would crumble. Troops were implicitly promised that they would be greeted by jubilant Iraqis waving American flags and cheering as the tanks and humvees rolled by, almost a “re-dux” of U.S. troops entering Paris after the Second World War to the cheers of those now oh-so-ungrateful French.

But this Bush-Rumsfeld-Ashcroft fantasy was not to be. While the ruling political system of Saddam Hussein could be blown to bits from the sky, the notion that the new U.S. empire could roll in as an unimpeded occupation force was wrong. Consequently, while Bush declared “major combat” operations over on May 1,





2003, as this postscript is being written the Iraqi resistance to the new empire has caught the U.S. ruling class dramatically off guard. And the working class foot soldiers, as always, are paying the price. It is significant that even the "new" volunteer army is reacting to this reality jolt. Having been sold an entire set of fabrications to justify the war, including the lie that Iraq could be tied to Al Qaeda and the 9/11 attacks, the troops on the ground are beginning to feel deceived.

Troops of the Third Infantry Division, representing 12,000 of the 148,000 U.S. troops currently in Iraq, and certainly representing one of the groups most directly involved in ground fighting, aired their grievances in interviews this month with ABC news. Most of those interviewed felt betrayed by the triple extension of their stay in Iraq, one called for the resignation of Donald Rumsfeld, and Private Jason Ring ("standing next to his humvee") was quoted as saying, "We liberated Iraq. Now the people here don't want us here, and guess what? We don't want to be here either! So why are we still here? Why don't they bring us home?" Another soldier was quoted as writing in an e-mail, "We have been told twice that we were going home and twice we have been ordered to stay in Iraq. Our morale is not high or low.

1968. By all stretches of the imagination, May 1968 was truly a magnificent display of creative power and collective solidarity.

The 1960s was in many ways seen as an opening up of the largely quiet 1950s when senator Joseph McCarthy succeeded in publicly exposing filmmakers, fellow politicians and others he deemed as communists or communist sympathizers in a witch hunt that was reminiscent of the Salem witch trials. But no sooner had such a space opened up, the winds started to blow back in the direction of privatism, nationalism and separatism. The core of universalism in the 1960s gave way to actively supporting exotic Third World movements as bulwarks against the depredations of US imperialism. Many women who were involved in the feminist movements started to declare that they were somehow biologically better than men because they possessed an "innate" intuition – a connection to Goddesses and the Earth – that men, unfortunate for them, weren't endowed with. In their embrace of intuition, a good portion even went so far as to deny rationality altogether, because after all it is symbolizes maleness. In the end, according to this narrow vision, women shouldn't use their own brains, bodies, activity and rational powers of persuasion to end their misery, they should let Goddesses do it for them! So came the rise of new ageism and a retreat from direct, public engagement and confrontation, to the nuclear family and the white picket fences of suburbia.

Division reigned supreme. Finally, when we get to today, any invocation of internationalism and universalism is seen as suspect and part of an age that is of no relevance for today. This sentiment is so strong that *any* – even if it is deep and thoughtful – critique of nationalism, national liberation movements, feminism or gay culture is often times seen as unacceptable, privileged, insensitive and even bigoted! The problem with this is that, from my experience, it is frequently these very same people, who for various reasons, want to exclude and deny free expression to those with substantive criticisms of their politics. And then they accuse you of insensitivity and even bigotry!

### Unity in Diversity

It is not only that there's virtually no internationalist spirit of solidarity left, but that its very memory has been consigned to the dustbin of history's failures. We are taught in school, on the job, by the media and by our families that liberal-democratic-capitalism is good for Americans and so therefore it must be good for the world. In this democratic multiculturalism, we are told that issues of nationalism, racial oppression, sexism and the like have – or soon will – vanish because people's "mindsets" will – if not have! – change(d), allowing for acceptance of difference. But capitalism (and



arose victorious from the rubble of carpet bombings and radioactive babies. As a system capitalism, after this period, proved stronger and more resilient than ever before.

It was not until the 1960s, with the US embroiled in an unwinnable war in Southeast Asia, that any kind of large-scale movement emerged with a significant number of participants having an internationalist perspective.

Riding on the coattails of the 1960s, large numbers of people protested against the continuing escalation of the Vietnam War and others tried to – with some success – connect the war in Vietnam with civil rights and the oppression of women. The world over was shaken by protests, strikes and sit-ins which consisted of workers, the poor and young students, who initially held more universal ideas of an internationally united mankind. It was a *far cry* from being on the scale of the pre world war period during the Paris Commune of 1871 and the interwar period of the Russian and German revolutions, but there emerged a consensus that *both* men and women didn't benefit from sexual repression and patriarchy. With this understanding, there arose attempts to challenge and undermine a society in which free expression of sexuality was forbidden. And such an understanding brought many a young person to openly express, in a public manner, their sexual side. Here is where the students at the Nanterre in Paris were rankled, in part, over the university's refusal to allow male students to visit female students in their dorms. An irritation with authority helped ignite the massive wildcat strikes that spread throughout much of the country in May

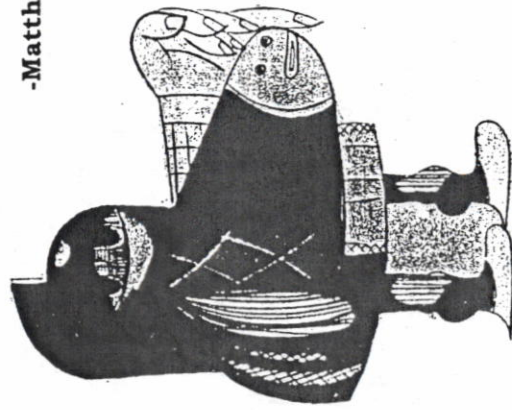


It is non-existent."

Such dissent brought a quick rebuke from the White House. Division officers on the ground were given strict orders to silence the troops; some found their careers threatened. General John Abizaid starkly announced, "None of us that wear this uniform are free to say anything disparaging about the secretary of defence or the president of the United States."

But the troops on the ground retain their ability to think. The current crisis in Iraq has revealed that recruiting working class youth into the armed forces with the lure of economic advancement, essentially an "economic" draft of the most disadvantaged members of the working class, rather than a society-wide draft, still does not produce a military ready to fight extensively and with great suffering for the advancement of an empire. This developing schism can be nurtured not only by continued education and agitation among military personnel, but also work among those working class youth who are still civilians and may yet find themselves recruited to become the replacement troops for the war-weary still in Iraq.

As these words are being written, the Third Infantry Division has taken the 148th admitted combat fatality of the current war as a young soldier was blown from his humvee by a land mine. The U.S. press has noted his death as the fatality which marks the 2003 war as more fatal to U.S. soldiers than the 1991 war against Iraq. His fellow soldiers may see a deeper meaning.



-Matthew Rinaldi, July 2003



# NATIONALISM, SOCIAL IDENTITY AND INTERNATIONALISM

*I have my own accent when speaking foreign languages: I was born fair-haired and I gradually become dark-haired.*  
-Arthur Cravan, "Notes"

The internationalist spirit that accompanied radical upheavals like Russia in 1917 and Spain in 1936 has all but faded from collective memory. At such crucial moments in history, those proletarians who overthrew their respective governments were enamored with a collective vision of the universal solidarity of man. Largely, they had a sense that their cultural, ethnic, racial, gender as well as age differences were secondary to what they held in common as a class and as a species. The sentiment was that their exploitation by a band of easily identifiable capitalist exploiters could come to an end if they fought together *socially* in class struggle. And once the proletariat united in social revolution and overthrew the capitalist class, they could then begin to construct a new world – based on committees, factory councils and communes – where the sharing of goods and resources would finally replace wage slavery.

This fierce cry was echoed when, during the Russian revolution, free soviets<sup>1</sup> and in the countryside on a much smaller scale communes were established after the revolution of 1917 to replace the Czarist autocracy. The 'Internationale' was fervently sung which ends with the bold lines, "The 'Internationale' shall be the human race." The Bolsheviks eventually strangled the revolution, killing the free Soviets and crushing the sailors' revolt in Kronstadt in 1921, by installing a dictatorship of the party over that of the proletariat. And finally after Lenin's death in 1924, Stalin presided as absolute dictator. It should be noted however, that many participants – worker, peasant, anarchist and left communist alike – in the beginning phases, firmly thought that the world was on the cusp of the start of the international revolution. In fact, Petrograd was seen, by those brave proletarians who downed their tools, as a link in a chain to other industrial cities where the workers in Berlin and Glasgow would follow the path of their bold footsteps.

Spain in 1936, (particularly the region of Catalonia in which the militia the "POUM" was the strongest) had similar stirrings of the shared interests of humanity as a whole. To the insurgents in Catalonia, for example, they were not fighting against one another based upon a slight difference in linguistic tongue, rather they were struggling against the dictatorship of the economy

Third World struggles, we had little awareness of the real issues at play in modern society. One of the most militant Berkeley confrontations did indeed begin as a "demonstration of solidarity" with the May 1968 revolt in France, but we had no conception of what the latter was really about – we were under the vague impression that it was some sort of "student protest against de Gaulle" along the narrow lines we were familiar with.<sup>14</sup>

But support for national liberation is still very much with us today. As an example, most critics of the Bush administration often advocate for an independent ("democratic," that goes without saying) Iraq or perhaps for two nation-states; a Kurdish one and an Iraqi one, or maybe even dividing Iraq between Sunni's and Shi'ites. But in any case, this constitutes little more than territorial division between ethnically defined entities. Again we come back to the old canard of "identity": the popularly held belief that human beings have to be defined in exclusive terms of their ethnicity and then because of this act accordingly...

## The World is One

What is the point of talking about the Second International, Palestine/Israel and the break-up of Yugoslavia? Because, quite simply, these events shape how we relate to the world. All of these seemingly disparate pieces help to make the puzzle whole. And discussing them is important because they, viewed together, have validity. Capital still rules. Its many variations and differences in outward appearance does not change its essential, underlying function and objective: putting the idle to work, turning the world into one big marketplace, while the various nation-states engage in inter-imperialist feuds and rivalries that effectively keep the proletariat and the poor of each country tied to "their" government's national interests.

The onset of WWII in 1939 and its subsequent end in 1945 put a definitive halt to the mass proletarian insurrections that paralyzed Europe from 1917-1937. The spirit of internationalism that permeated the German insurgents in November 1918 (which lead them to erect barricades, mutiny against the armed forces, fraternize and install workers and soldiers councils) all but withered away.<sup>15</sup> Hitler emerged triumphant in 1933 and it was as if all memory and traces of the Russian revolution and the council movement in Germany itself had been forfeited to defend the German nation. And after the final slaughter of WWII in 1945 – the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima in August, 1945 by the Democrat Harry Truman – capitalism



It only made sense for the caring person to call for the US to unconditionally withdraw from Southeast Asia so the people in Vietnam could be from the terror and torture the US military inflicted on them. It is another can of worms to advocate in favor of the Vietcong national army to install their party-state as a human replacement for the colonists. Given the population in Vietnam as well as those poor peasants living in China in 1949 had little alternative but to fight with the NLF or Mao's Chinese Communist Party. Indeed, if one is a poor peasant anything sounds better than continued exploitation by feudal lords and colonialist thugs. However, the problem with this understanding is that it shares the illusion that a Ho Chi Minh or Mao Tse-tung will bring liberation. Anyone who studies Mao's China will realize that after the seizure of state power by the Chinese Communist Party, China was hardly a utopian paradise for the poor peasants.

Here too is where western Marxist-Leninists held the mistaken view that the Algerian and Vietnamese nation-states were a positive step on the road to mankind's final emancipation. On the other hand, according to this logic, the French and American nation-states were seen as archconservative. Gone from this was an understanding that national-state entities, in whatever guise they take, are inherently militaristic and antagonistic to a libertarian social change project. Indeed, *all* nation-states (whether they be liberal capitalism like here in the US or the state-capitalist regime of Cuba) rely on a standing army and a police force, both of which are, by their very nature, conservative.

Ken Knabb, in a part of his book *Public Secrets*, draws from his frustrating experience with American partisans of Third World national liberation movements during the 1960s. He has some important commentary to add to the debate:

...the healthy participatory-democracy tendencies of the early New Left were being smothered by browbeating, spectacularization and ideological delirium. Calls for terrorism and "picking up the gun" were echoed in much of the underground press. Activists who disdained "theoretical nitpicking" were caught unprepared when Students for a Democratic Society was taken over by asinine sects debating which combination of Stalinist regimes to support (China, Cuba, Vietnam, Albania, North Korea). The vast majority of us were certainly not Stalinists (to speak for myself, even as a child, reading about the crushing of the 1956 Hungarian revolution, I had enough sense to know that Stalinism was total bullshit); but in our ignorance of political history it was easy to identify with martyred heroes like Che Guevara or the Vietcong as long as they were exotic enough that we didn't really know much about them. Fixating on the spectacle of

and the state, which manifested itself in the Republican government Franco's fascists, along with the capitalist class as a whole. At the time radical libertarians were highly critical of and fought against nationalism in Spain. The different national liberation aspirations such as, Basque independence from Spain, was understood as self-defeating.

Today, however, things are starkly different. No longer is it important to recognize what individuals have in common in terms of their socio-economic class or in relation to one another as emphatic caring beings. Rather, today it has become common wisdom to proclaim, "I am gay!" "I am bisexual!" "I am a woman!" – thus parceling off and separating yourself from someone who doesn't identify themselves as you do. These statements being so pervasive, it's as if understanding and connection has reached a ludicrous level of zoological reference points. Seldom, if ever, do I hear, "I am a wage slave who wants a different world than the one we are forced to inhabit." First and foremost we are what we do. Our activity shapes our lives and the world around us. Because say, I am a woman, the way I am socialized and treated as a woman is different from that of a man, which needs to be recognized and fought fervently against. However, what I share in common with a man is that I am used by the capitalist class who derives surplus value from my creativity and productivity. Nothing can be *entirely* explained through the class struggle framework, but there is a lot that can be. And of interest to us here is how many people's understanding of reality has become so split today that any invocation – even when it recognizes racism, sexism and homophobia and takes a stand virulently against such poison – of a universal interdependent humanity is eyed with suspicion and in some cases outright hostility. Keeping this in mind, this article attempts to illustrate, through historical example and contemporary understanding, that advocating in favor of such a vision is really the only hope we have left for the planet and ourselves.

### The Second International and National Chauvinism

At a conference in Basel, Switzerland in November in 1912, socialists from the largely social democratic Second International met together to discuss and vote on the position they would take on the inevitable outbreak of WWI. The conclusion they came to was that the slaughter and horror that would accompany such a descent into the barbarism of war was only of benefit to the propertied class and the governments of Europe. In anticipation of the crisis of the war, those in attendance voted in droves against granting their governments war-credits. However, the International, in large measure, never planned a course of action if WWI were to break out.

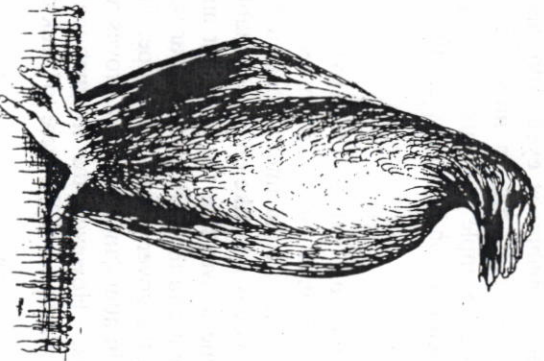


Failing to break from their social democratic origins, many present at the conference then went on to support, on the eve of WWI, the bourgeoisies' war on August 4, 1914. As the French, German, British, Austrian and Russian armies donned their uniforms and readied themselves to plunge bayonets into the hearts of their fellow workers, only smaller sections of the international stuck to their principles and declared the war to be a mad plunge to the depths of national chauvinism

Of those who declared their categorical rejection of the war was the staunch anti-militarist member of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), Karl Liebknecht. On Mayday 1916 at a demonstration in Berlin, Liebknecht, in spite of his social democratic origins and having had voted in favor of war credits initially, loudly proclaimed, with rancorous venom, to a large throng of nearly ten thousand people, "Down with the war! Down with the government!" To which the police responded by whipping their horses into the crowd and arresting the dissident Liebknecht.

Rosa Luxemburg's contempt for the SPD's capitulation to German nationalist fervor is clearly articulated in her classic pamphlet, *The Crisis in German Social Democracy*, written under the pseudonym "Junius." Even though she too never completely broke with social democracy and insisted that the initial stages of capitalism were necessary for laying the groundwork for a future world, her analysis of the German Social Democratic Party as well as WWI, is perhaps one of the strongest anti-militarist statements of her age.

Starting with the jarring sentences:



name "national liberation" alone implies the content of national liberation movements. The intention of national liberation is to liberate the nation from foreign and domestic subjugation. But with the freeing of the nation, as was seen in Cuba after Fidel Castro's army overthrew the Batista regime in 1959, a new form of tyranny develops. In Cuba a new bureaucracy replaced the old and an independent nation-state, free from the paws of domestic and foreign domination, was installed as a "socialist" workers state.

Many participants in the movements of the 1960s started to extol and uncritically endorse the Vietcong as a means to rid the US from Vietnam. This is where, in great part, the New Left movements went down the wrong course. If you are supporting (without a touch of critical inquiry) Third World Stalinist groupings, then what is your relationship to the world in the here and now? In the eyes of many 1960s radicals, there was no serious thought or examination into what an endorsement for national liberation armies actually meant in reality.



the Irish Republican Army plays out in reality. Easily such an entity, if it were to become a new state formation, could turn the now oppressed Catholics into oppressors of the Protestants. Indeed, it is inconsistent to take sides in capitalist conflicts.

### **Behind the Veneer and Allure of National Liberation Movements**

*In the era of the unleashing of this imperialism, national wars are no longer possible. National interests serve only as the pretext for putting the laboring masses of the people under the domination of their mortal enemy, imperialism. The policy of the imperialist states and the imperialist war cannot give to a single oppressed nation its liberty and its independence. The small nations, the ruling class of which are the accomplices of their partners in the big states, constitute only the pawns on the imperial chessboard of the great powers, and are used by them, just like their own working masses, in wartime, as instruments to be sacrificed to capitalist interests after the war.*

### **-Rosa Luxemburg, Theses on the tasks of International Social Democracy, 1916**

During WWI the Bolshevik dictator Lenin erroneously believed that movements of national secession and national liberation could weaken the power of capital. He along with Karl Liebknecht thought that the best way to denounce imperialist colonization was to defeat the enemy within – the Russian bourgeoisie for example. But pinning all the blame on the enemy at home is tantamount to presenting anti-Americanism, for example, as a virtue. The problem with this is that capitalism is a world-organized system and if oppressed peoples secede to form their own nation-states, the very same contradictions reappear: wage labor, exploitation, slavery and the like. To Lenin, he thought that such secession would weaken the primary imperialist powers. But as has been proven historically, isolated national liberation regimes often end up becoming more easily manipulated by the great powers.

Cuba is one instance of a state capitalist entity that has remained vulnerable since its inception. The US government has continually focused on the undeniably heinous human rights record of Cuban state capitalism in an attempt to weaken support for Castro's government. Also, the campaign against isolated countries such as Cuba helps to deflect attention away from the US government's own non-Kosher torture and terror; domestically and internationally.

When we get back to examining such movements, it is plain to see that the

The scene has thoroughly changed. The six weeks' march to Paris has become world drama. Mass murder has become a monotonous task, and the final solution is not one step nearer. Capitalist rule is caught in its own trap, and cannot ban the spirit it has invoked.<sup>3</sup>

Sternly declaring her disgust with the state of German social democracy, she wields an iron fist at those majority social democrats who supported Germany's national defense against the purportedly barbarian Russians:

Is an invasion really the horror of all horrors, before which all class conflict within the country must subside as though spellbound by some supernatural witchcraft? According to the police theory of bourgeois patriotism and military rule, every evidence of the class struggle is a crime against the interests of the country because they maintain that it constitutes a weakening of the stamina of the nation. The social democracy has allowed itself to be perverted into this same distorted point of view. Has not the history of modern capitalist society shown that in the eyes of capitalist society, foreign invasion is by no means the unmitigated terror as it is generally painted; that on the contrary, it is a measure to which the bourgeoisie has frequently and gladly resorted as an effective weapon against the enemy within? Did not the Bourbons and the aristocrats of France invite foreign invasion against the Jacobins? Did not the Austrian counterrevolution in 1849 call out the French invaders against Rome, the Russian Budapest? Did not the "Party of Law and Order" in France in 1850 openly threaten an invasion of the Cossacks in order to bring the National Assembly to terms? And was not the Bonaparte army released, and the support of the Prussian army against the Paris Commune assured, by the famous contract Jules Favre, Thiers and Co., and Bismarck?<sup>4</sup>

As can be seen from these short passages, Luxemburg utterly abhorred the horror of WWI. At the time her position on international revolution against national war was not massively popular. However, it enjoyed a base of support and alliance that helped shape the German revolution of 1918-1919. In fact, when the soldiers and sailors councils rocked the foundations of the German Empire, the insurgents owed much to Luxemburg's criticism of the social democrats as well as her vital fighting energy. And despite the fact that the extreme left in Germany and Holland was marginal prior to the revolution of 1918-1919, there still remained a small number of activists who were committed to fleshing out and adhering to an internationalist perspective. In this respect the Dutch left communist Herman Gorter shared



insights and conclusions similar to those advanced by Rosa Luxemburg. In his piece "The Origins of Nationalism in the Proletariat," Gorter advocates for a revolutionary internationalist position that starkly counterposes the popular reformist one. He drives home with compelling force that:

Those who desire only immediate advantages *must* agree to colonialist policies, and so agree to imperialism and nationalism. For it is those that promise immediate advantages.

Only those who see further, who recognize that colonialist policies ultimately bring more harm than profit, and especially those who realize that they split and fragment the proletariat – in short, only those who think and feel in a truly revolutionary socialist manner – can oppose nationalistic imperialism despite the advantages which it brings.

Only those who penetrate still deeper and recognize that imperialism unites all the capitalists of the world against the proletariat, only then they can entirely eradicate nationalism from their hearts and unite with the world proletariat in a single fraternity in a single revolutionary struggle against capital.<sup>5</sup>

Gorter's sentiments, which were translated into German from his longer work *Der Imperialismus, der Weltkrieg und die Sozial-demokratie* in 1915, are not merely some pithy, outdated polemical relic from a by-gone past. On the contrary, as the world continues to be divided up into mutually hostile and exclusive national, ethnic, gender and racial categories, the internationalism advanced by the Dutch and German communist left<sup>6</sup> are still only too relevant.

### French Socialism: An Attachment to the Nation

From as far back as the French revolution of 1789 it can be noted that French socialists tended not to have an explicit critique of the French nation as such. Marx saw in this an elitist tendency that was a cause for concern. Many French radicals thought of internationalism in the sense of all other nations becoming French. In their minds the French nation was the cradle of civilization. As related to WWI, it can be said that French socialists were, prior to 1914, adamantly against the army. Their understanding was that the officers' class was a stronghold of reaction, and honestly, because of this, considered taking action against the war if it were to break out. But at the same time, they supported the concept of the French nation, which many French socialists identified with the common people, the masses, the toiling masses, i.e. almost everyone except for a tiny privileged minority. These

It has to be acknowledged here that the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) is a show trial in which truth (the very facts) is used by murderers judging other murderers. If one takes the time to look at the Nuremberg trials, it is easy to see the utter hypocrisy in trying Nazis for war crimes, but not even bothering to come to terms with the Allied firebombing of civilians in Dresden Germany in 1945, the utterly despicable atomic bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima in the same year and we also can't forget the annihilation of Tokyo by firebombs. Beyond this is the fact that while Milosevic is one of the culprits in the whole debacle in the Balkans, he did not kill millions, nor can he be held accountable for every death in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>12</sup> Hitler and the Nazis, on the other hand, did kill millions of Jews (and meant to). But even so trials such as these will not stop similar atrocities from happening again. Still, to some, the Tribunal is a shining beacon of "justice," and with such a view, it succeeds in making the guilty accountable for their crimes. If this is so, then what about Serb victims of aggression brought on by the thugs of the KLA? Are they not as important as those who died at the hands of Serbian death mongers?<sup>13</sup>

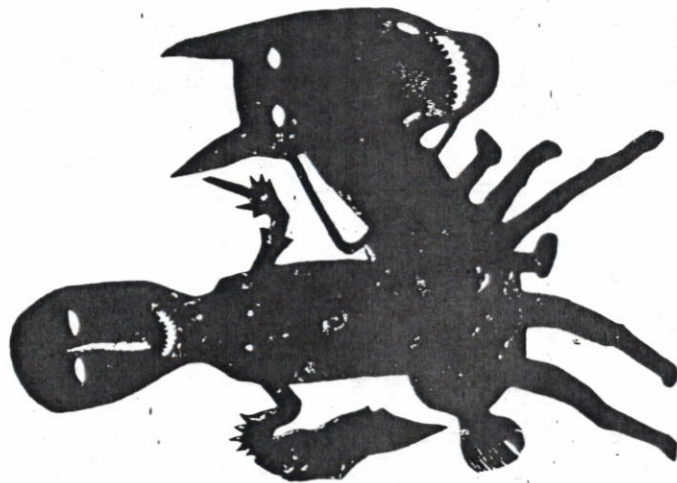
In a world full of horrors, some have come to the conclusion that supporting a lesser evil/alternative to the worst possible evil is more humane than just standing back and not choosing from any of the choices of evil offered to us. The less extremes, the better. But history doesn't work that way. Sometimes the lesser evil turns out to be the worst evil, when it's not more of the same dressed in slightly different clothing.

A case in point related to lesser evilism turning into the worst evil can be illustrated by looking to the Students for a Democratic (SDS) society's support for the "lesser evil" of the Democrat, Lyndon B. Johnson. The SDS naively believed that Johnson would stop the escalation of the war in Vietnam. He canvassed under the advertised slogan of "peace candidate." The SDS swallowed it whole. And upon his election in 1964, he quickly stepped up (within months) US involvement in Vietnam eventually sending around 550,000 US troops into harm's way. It is too obvious not see the ultimate effect of lesser evilism.

And with regard to Bosnia and the break up of Yugoslavia, there were no lesser evils. To support one entity against another meant either support for a Serb state, Muslim state or Croat state all of which are, by their very nature, inherently dictatorial formations.

As internationalist communists, we cannot endorse the construction of more nation-states, particularly ones that exacerbate national tensions between different ethnicities. This is not merely based upon some abstract principle – although principles certainly do play a part – but how such support for say





This brings us to the question of Serb treatment of ethnic Albanians which was the advertised reason given as to why NATO bombed Kosovo in 1999: First of all, wouldn't a bombing campaign heighten the tensions already existing between Albanians and Serbs? Also, would not an indiscriminate dropping of depleted uranium drenched missiles target not only Serbs but also anyone in the general vicinity including Albanians? These questions have never really been answered by those who relish in pointing out Serb atrocities, and never examine any other motivation but pure and simple Serb aggression.

However, even if we leave these factors aside, what would become of Albanian secession? Tyranny tends to breed more tyranny, so too is the case in the aftermath of NATO's deliberate and methodical destruction of Serbia. Once the Serbs were ousted from power in June of 1999, the Marxist-Leninist influenced national liberation force; the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) placed itself into governmental command posts with the tacit silence of the Western neo-colonialists. Rampant attacks on Serbs became widespread, forcing many to abandon Kosovo and to flee to refugee centers. But the KLA didn't only terrorize Serbs, they also antagonized and attacked fellow Albanians - who they claimed to be protecting from Serb aggression. So much for Albanian national liberation...

socialists were strongly against the army, but they hardly ever were against the nation. So when the war broke out in 1914, French anti-militarism died a peaceful, natural death, and these socialists came to the aid of the French nation in its imperial conquests.<sup>7</sup>

### Peter Kropotkin: Aid to the Entente Powers

If it seems even mildly strange that a large portion of the Second International would support the bourgeoisie in the war effort, it is even more odd to think that the principled anarchist opponent of the state, Peter Kropotkin, would support the Entente powers.

Many commentators use the example of Kropotkin to serve as supposed "evidence" proving anarchism to be a bourgeois conception. Without going too much into this, we will say that the same could be said of Marxism if you are reducing it to its largely supportive role given to the war effort after August 1914. Many anarchists, including Malatesta, detested Kropotkin's siding with France, Russia and Britain.

Kropotkin's reasons for supporting France, Russia and Britain against Germany are more complex than is often suggested. The aging Kropotkin firmly believed that the nation of Germany, which he came to identify with all Germans regardless of social class and status, was the epitome of evil. Coming from Russia himself, he realized the sway Germany held over Russia. The Russian military, led by Nicholas I and Nicholas II, closely resembled that of the Prussian Army. In point of fact, the influence of German militarism was so strong that Kropotkin feared its continued





influence would make the Czar, militarily and politically speaking, even stronger. With such strength this would spoil the possibility of overthrowing the Czar once and for all.

Kropotkin's anti-Germanism inevitably led to a nationalism that, in Kropotkin's mind, "forced" him to take sides in an inter-imperialist conflict. The man who wrote many influential books and articles decrying the state, ended up seeing Russia, France and Britain as a lesser evil in light of the heavily militaristic German nation-state. His support for the war effort was predicated on the misguided belief that for the well being of the Russian, French (and ultimately, German as well) masses, Germany, Austria and Turkey had to be defeated. Logically, Kropotkin – and other fellow anarchists – then went on to help draft, sign and distribute a pro-war document now known as the "Manifesto of Sixteen." Approximately three years after the end of WWI, Kropotkin perished. But before Kropotkin died, the German Empire perished after its defeat by the Entente powers in 1918. And the mass insurgency by proletarians in November 1918 sealed its fate. However, this wouldn't be the definitive end of German militarism. Hitler acceded to power – at the behest of the social democrats – in 1933, invaded Poland in 1939 and heightened the military apparatus to a level not yet seen in Kropotkin's age. Kropotkin's myopia failed to see that the only real hope was to fight against capitalism as a unified whole, not just its bloated evil face as represented in German militarism and later national socialism...

### One Problem With Internationalism Itself

The use of the word internationalism itself has one basic flaw. As the word clearly states, it does not always oppose the nation as such. It adds nations up, and vainly hopes that they could live peacefully side-by-side.

### For a Worldwide Intifada Without Borders

*The day the Palestinians become a nation like other nations, I will no longer be on their side.*

-Jean Genet

The state of Israel is a curious example of national ethnic identity reaching its logical conclusion: expulsion of those, from its annexed land in the 1948 war, who the state of Israel deems as enemy terrorists – the Palestinians. As long as the state of Israel, with its mega-funding and lobbyists in the US, continues to escalate its war against the Palestinians, the more people in the Middle East will define themselves as Muslim, Arab or Palestinian.

It is a vicious cycle. The strange and twisted irony of it all is that Israel needs anti-Semitism (and US funding and support!) to survive as a nation-

victims of Serb aggression were violently laid to rest, the consensus among a number of smug journalists and television viewers, who daily watched the carnage purportedly perpetrated exclusively by the Serbs, was to support the Bosnian Muslims who were undeniably being shelled, beaten and killed by Bosnian Serb mercenaries.

But who were the Bosnian Muslims? One of the problems with the whole siege in Bosnia was that the term Bosnian Muslim was used interchangeably with Bosnian. To be sure, it wasn't only Bosnian Muslims who were living in the region, but also Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats. The press often got tangled up in referring to the Bosnian Muslims as the insiders while the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats were, by implication, the outsiders attacking Bosnia. This in and of itself says a lot about the conflict. If you are equating a specific ethnic group (Bosnian Muslims) with the entire native population there is obviously going to be a heightening of national rivalry.<sup>10</sup> Along with all of this was the fact that the leader, Alija Izetbegovic, of Bosnia-Herzegovina had sympathies with Islamic Fundamentalism. But to the Western press, the only victims in this conflict were the Bosnian Muslims, while the Serbs were deemed as the *sole* aggressors. Inevitably this heightened national unity and lead the Serbs to strike harder, starting to believe that they would become the national minority in an advertised multicultural state. This was also a selling point in Serb nationalist propaganda that aimed at appealing to this sentiment.

All the blood and conflagration that occurred in Bosnia-Herzegovina after it broke apart in 1992 was the product of different nationalist elites – Croat, Serb and Muslim – vying for political and economic clout and power over the regional territory of Bosnia. As with any war, along with it came impalement on blast furnaces and the calculated rape of civilians by psychopaths and military madmen from all sides: Serb, Croat and Muslim. The pillage, murder, plunder, misery, wounds and blood were the end result of the ethnic partitioning of Bosnia, which was recognized by the European Community and the US in April 1992. The whole history and nuanced details of the conflict are too complex to deal with here. Suffice to say that largely the Serbs did not want to secede from Bosnia-Herzegovina because they sensed that their heads would be severed in Serb populated areas of Bosnia and Croatia. It can't be denied that Serb mercenaries, leaders and manipulators had their own sets of designs they too wanted to impose.

But in the end a great portion of the population – Croat, Serb and Muslim alike – fled because they wanted to escape from all the death and misery. To reduce the whole conflict exclusively to some nasty Serb plot is not only racist but also a flat out lie.



### The Balkans: Simmering Cauldron of National Blindness

It is not a surprise that a large portion of the oppressed, once freed from the shackles of their enslavement by a national liberation army, then go on to become oppressors themselves. The name of the police force and army changes, but its essential function remains the same: utilization of the police force to defend private property from being ransacked, while the army defends against hostile outsiders who are unwelcome in "their" fatherland.

In the break up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, this trail of oppressed becoming oppressors spans miles and miles - where any trace of human beings living side by side in solidarity and interdependence with one another, the land and the larger environment as a whole, has withered steadily away. This is *not* however to say that the Serbs, Croats, Muslims, Albanians and gypsies all lived in harmonic paradise during the reign of Tito and Milosevic. This is a fiction just as much as those who suggest that the feuds between the different ethnicities date back from time immemorial. But during the height of the break-up in the early-mid 1990s, it reached historically catastrophic proportions on the level of the Balkan wars of the early 1900s.

As has been declared time and time again by openly complicit Western journalists and numerous activists advocating for Albanians and Bosnian Muslims, the conflict, according to this logic, was somehow ignited solely and entirely by Milosevic and the Serbs themselves as a unified ethnic group. Leaving aside the incredibly dubious and slanderous nature of such accusations and one-sided unfounded hearsay, the reality of the situation in the Balkans can be likened to this: If during the 1930s in Germany while Hitler was killing the Jews, the Rom and the homosexuals, the Jews were in turn killing the Aryans, the Rom and the homosexuals, and in turn the Rom were killing the Aryans, the Jews and the homosexuals and while all this was occurring the homosexuals were killing the Aryans, the Jews and the Rom! This is a good analogy, but it is somewhat unsound in that there did occur mass murder in Yugoslavia by *all* sides, not genocide on the scale of the Nazis.

More pointedly, it wasn't just Serbs killing Muslims, but Muslims killing Serbs and Croats killing Serbs and so on. When the Western press wept, cried and deplored the Serbs cutting, with a searing knife, the throat of an old Bosnian Muslim woman in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the same press then turned a blind eye to the Christmas Massacre at Kravica in Srebrenica on January 7, 1993, when Serb villagers were slaughtered by the always and ever so benevolent Bosnian Muslim military forces.

In the land that many in the West came to regard as a morgue in which

state. The Israeli state often goes out of its way to label any word or statement even slightly critical of its sickening policies as rabidly anti-Semitic or the fulminations of a self hating Jew. Indeed, there is good reason for Israelis' to be angered at anti-Semitic hate mongers, however, criticism doesn't always imply bigotry. Israel claims to fight against anti-Semitism, but Israel only further angers people in the Middle East by supporting and allying with warmongers such as its most cozy friend the US. Sharon also has a warm and convenient friendship with the Italian state. Not surprisingly, Silvio Berlusconi's idol is the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini. Berlusconi ultimately serves as the advocate for the US and Israeli lobby in the European Union. Perhaps if he didn't, Israel would accuse the Italian government of anti-Semitism...

In this situation, where should the emphatic person then stand? According to some, we should always stand on the side of the oppressed. I would tend to agree. However, some, illogically, then extrapolate from this and support the Palestinian Authority as a force to be utilized to fight against Israeli exploitation. The argument is that the Palestinians need a strong set of leaders and negotiators in order to stop Israel from continuing to act with such impunity.

But does Yasser Arafat actually represent the sentiments of the Palestinians living in the occupied territories? The sane and aware person would have to, upon careful examination of the question, answer with a resolute: No! The Oslo Accords of September 1993 are but a lingering and forceful illustration that the leadership of the Palestinian national movement is against the interests of the general population of Palestine.

The Oslo Accords were an attempt by Israel and Palestine to reach an "agreement" regarding Israeli occupation of Palestine. The basis of the Accords was that Israel would *eventually* withdraw from the occupied territory. At first glance, to many this sounds good. But the reality is that it is not a good thing. Far from it. When someone, particularly the government, says that they will do something *eventually* it doesn't mean much unless it is backed up by action.

In actuality, the original Oslo Accords that the Palestinian leadership agreed on was Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in five years. In the fall of 1993, during the Taba negotiations, it was discovered that Israel intended to retain control of many settlements in Gaza, even after it was agreed that they would be dismantled.

The kicker is this: After much acrimony during the Taba negotiations, on November 18, 1993 the Palestinian leadership accepted the terms in full. In short, Israel was still granted the right to withhold and occupy large amounts





of land in the Gaza Strip.

This is only one example of the massive betrayal that the national liberation leaders of Palestine have meted out to the Palestinians under occupation. That is why we cringe when we see American college students defending the bunker of Yasser Arafat, which is decorated with luxuries such as adequate food and cell-phones that no Palestinian in the occupied territories enjoys. Not to say that Israel was or is justified in attacking Arafat, but for American citizens to go over there and defend the rulers and negotiators of Palestine is to us sad and unfortunate. (If people want to get involved on this question, it's not very hard to figure out which American universities fund Israeli domination. Find the schools and expose them publicly through picketing and the spreading of information.)

To quote an article in the latest issue of *Do or Die* entitled "Occupational Hazards: Solidarity Work in Palestine," in which an informed, aware and respectable solidarity worker is interviewed by *Do or Die*:

There are issues about which Palestinian organizations you work with and what their ultimate aims are. The PA was put in place by the Oslo Accords as a way of running the Palestinian state. It's a Bantustan for the benefit of the Israelis. You quite often end up working with organizations like that. Really, what is waiting in the wings to take over Palestinian society is as politically suspect as the Israeli government. Although potentially it will not be as violent to its own people, there are still well corroborated reports of murder, torture and imprisonment by the P.A. People are frightened of the Palestinian police and security forces. Large sections of the

population have little or no faith in the P.A. In the Gaza strip I got the impression that the P.A. were fully in control and that it was running everything, whereas in the West Bank they have far less influence. Nablus was run by a town committee, there was more autonomy...

...I have heard the P.A. described as Stalinists, a totalitarian system waiting in the wings. There was a definite attempt by the P.A. to co-opt Rachel Corrie's death for their own political agenda. One of the more distressing things in Rafah is that it's a population under siege which is not taking collective measures to defend itself. For example, if your house is demolished, the P.A. don't sort you out with anything. There's still a system of private landholding. It leaves a lot of people homeless with nowhere to go, there's no back up for them, except what they get through their kinship networks. There are a lot of wealthy people in the occupied territories: you see expensive cars, there is an elite. We were taken by the P.A. to something like a Pizza Hut where a week's wages was spent on each of us - corrupt as fuck. Collective resistance has been actively undermined by the fact that the P.A. are there to reinforce existing social and economic structures.<sup>9</sup>

Reading this passage we are reminded of the Shah in Iran in 1979. The Shah was effectively overthrown and massive strikes paralyzed the country. Additionally workers' committees and councils were installed. This was curtailed, partly, because of the alliance with the mullahs as a means to rid the Shah from power. And shortly thereafter the committees were destroyed and an Islamic Republic was proclaimed.

Putting aside fantasies about the P.A. being any sort of true solution to the problem, our understanding says this: the *only* solution for the Palestinian question is when the class despots of both Israel and Palestine are exposed, confronted and the workers and the poor of both regions come together to resolve the conflict. Given the current level of escalation by Israel, through propaganda and violent action taken against those in the occupied territories and the despairing retaliation taken by Palestinians against Israel and innocent civilians, this is a far-fetched idea.

However, the notion, advocated by many left-liberal social democrats and a horde of "peace" activists, that the problem can be dealt with and thus resolved within the framework of existing institutions and continued negotiations between Sharon's Likud Party and the P.A. is short-sighted and is a position that remains complicit with the endemic pattern of violence devouring the Middle East.